

The Strategic Nuclear Debate

Robert A. Levine

RAND

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PREFACE

This report is part of a project entitled "Still the Arms Debate," analyzing the range of differing views on national and international security policy in the 1980s. The questions asked are: *What* are the issues over which those who debate arms policy in the 1980s differ? *Why*—logically, not psychologically or politically—do they differ? *How* have these differences developed from the debates of the 1960s? The policy objective of the project is to help improve the debate by increasing understanding of the premises and lines of reasoning that cause people to disagree; and by improving the debate, to improve the making of security policy in the United States and other Western democracies, where the debate matters.

The long-run antecedent for the project is the author's 1963 book, *The Arms Debate*,¹ which asked the same questions almost a quarter of a century ago. This report is the second of three, which together will form the basis of a new volume, *Still the Arms Debate*. The first report was entitled *The Arms Debate and the Third World: Have We Learned from Vietnam?*² The third report will discuss the debate over NATO and military policy in Europe. In addition to the reports that will form parts of the book, a paper published by the UCLA Center for International and Strategic Affairs, "The SDI Debate as a Continuation of History," discussed a current central manifestation of the debate over nuclear weapons policy and arms control.³

The project is supported by The Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and The RAND Corporation.

¹Robert A. Levine, *The Arms Debate*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1963.

²Robert A. Levine, *The Arms Debate and the Third World: Have We Learned From Vietnam?* The RAND Corporation, R-3523-FF/CC/RC, May 1987.

³Robert A. Levine, "The SDI Debate as a Continuation of History," CISA Working Paper No. 55, Center for International and Strategic Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles, March 1986.

SUMMARY

The American debate over the use and control of nuclear weapons tends toward the theological. First, the stakes and issues readily invoke images of hell, Faustian bargains, and the like. Second, since little evidence is available, the debaters' assertions are untested and untestable. The dearth of test data has prevented the strategic debate from changing very much over the 25-30 years it has been taking place. (For the first 10-15 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the debate was more moral and philosophical than strategic.)

The two major issues dividing the debaters are:

- Whether (and in what circumstances and how) nuclear weapons should be used—or threatened—for any purpose other than to deter or defeat use of such weapons against American territory. Views here depend in large measure on beliefs about whether the use of nuclear weapons, once begun, can be controlled, particularly to avoid damage to civilian populations.
- How hard to strive for explicit agreements with the Soviet Union to control nuclear weapons. A major key to these views lies in the debaters' perceptions regarding the balance between aggressive ideological Soviet motivations always pushing toward imperial expansion on the one hand, and parallel fear of nuclear conflict to our own, which, together with a desire to shift resources to civil uses, leads them to substantial prudence on the other.

Three schools of thought divide over these issues. Two of them have had a major influence on the making of strategic nuclear policy, currently and historically:

- *The Extenders* believe that with careful planning, nuclear (and nonnuclear) weapons can be used in a limited counterforce strategy (one stressing military targets) that, if war does begin between the United States and the Soviet Union, can limit the damage to both sides and stop the escalation spiral far short of ultimate holocaust. This makes plausible the extension of deterrence to other vital interests beyond simple prevention of nuclear attack upon ourselves, and such plausibility in turn makes nuclear war less likely by discouraging the enemy's initial aggressive steps. Nuclear control is thus feasible; it is also necessary because the Soviets remain ideologically dedicated to

world domination in the long run, expressed as expansionism in the near term. But because the Soviets are also prudent, realistic deterrence of such expansionism is possible. The strategic nuclear policies of the Reagan administration are largely based on Extender doctrines developed by such analysts as Albert Wohlstetter, Colin Gray, Fred Hoffman, and, in a more political-military vein, Henry Kissinger.

- *The Limiters* do not refuse to think about the unthinkable. They strongly favor steps to increase the invulnerability of our nuclear retaliatory forces, and they prefer counterforce targeting of enemy military forces to targeting of populations. But they do not believe that such steps are likely to significantly control death, damage, or escalation if nuclear war does begin. It is not careful attention to detailed control that is the key to deterrence of nuclear or nonnuclear Soviet attack on U.S. vital interests; it is the uncertainties inherent in nuclear war in spite of all that control may or may not promise. These uncertainties sum up to what McGeorge Bundy has termed "Existential Deterrence"—deterrence that exists because nuclear weapons exist and all sides are afraid of opening Pandora's box. It is because of Existential Deterrence that the Soviets, although opportunistic in safe "Third World" areas and willing to probe politically in Europe, will continue, as they have for a quarter-century, to stay far from any overt military threat to Europe. This Soviet conservatism, plus growing needs to divert resources to civil uses, makes possible arms control agreements based on mutual self-interest. Much of the opposition to administration strategic policy is based on Limiter premises; in addition to Bundy, key concepts have been developed by Robert McNamara, Morton Halperin, Sidney Drell, and, with somewhat different views, the Harvard trio of Graham Allison, Albert Carnesale, and Joseph Nye. The American Catholic bishops, in their statement on nuclear war, fall into the Limiter school.

In addition to the Extenders and the Limiters, a third school of thought, the *Disarmers*, is unwilling to accept any variety of nuclear deterrence, except as a transitory expedient. Because they are further from the decisionmaking center, the Disarmers are less important to the main debate than are the two major schools—indeed, less than they were 30 years ago. Currently, perhaps the best known of the Disarmers is Jonathan Schell.

A fourth school, willing to take substantial risks of nuclear war to wipe out Communism, existed 30 years ago; it no longer does, at least not in any form worth discussing.

The three descriptions fit the schools today; they fit almost as well 30 years ago. Although *declaratory* American strategic policy—what we say we will do—has changed cyclically over the years, actual targeting and other plans have changed rather less, mainly by shifting weights among various options built in since Secretary McNamara moved away from John Foster Dulles's "Massive Retaliation."

The real change in the strategic nuclear debate has been in the membership of the two major schools. Through the mid-1960s, the Establishment consensus, including most of the analysts mentioned above, endorsed the counterforce nuclear propositions of the Extenders, albeit with more stress on arms control than today's Extenders express. The Limiters of the early 1960s, who put much more stress on disarmament and arms control, were composed mainly of academics outside the main decisionmaking caucus. By the end of the decade, however, McNamara in particular began to set forth doubts less about counterforce plans as such than about their importance in limiting damage and escalation. He and others associated with the Kennedy and Johnson administrations have moved toward an emphasis on arms control agreements, splitting the earlier consensus and adding substantially to the political and intellectual weight of the Limiters, but leaving a residue of bitterness among those who remained in the Extender camp. The Extenders accuse the Limiters of wanting to replace counterforce with a "MAD" (Mutual Assured Destruction) strategy, which deliberately and immorally puts civilian populations at risk in the belief that neither side would wage a nuclear war against these populations and thus such a war could not take place. The Limiters retort that Mutual Assured Destruction is not a strategy but an unalterable state of the world, which the Extenders' detailed counterforce strategies can do little to meliorate.

These differences have led to differing policy recommendations on the issues of the late 1980s.

The Extenders' recommendations in three key issue areas are:

- *Nuclear Strategy and Planning.* Plan and be prepared for the use of nuclear weapons in various situations for several purposes going beyond deterrence of attack upon ourselves, particularly to deter Soviet aggression in Europe.
- *Arms Control.* Be serious about arms control agreements with the Soviets if, and only if, they enhance our overall deterrent and political strategies.

- *The Strategic Defense Initiative.* Use SDI as a potentially important component of a discriminating counterforce strategy—important enough to bend or break out of the existing ABM treaty. SDI provides one major example of the weapon implications of the Extenders' strategy, and some of the arms control implications as well.

By contrast, Limiters' recommendations in the same three areas are:

- *Nuclear Strategy and Planning.* Move away from any use of nuclear weapons other than for deterrence of nuclear attack. To implement this, retain a nuclear force that is well enough protected to preclude a successful enemy first strike and continue counterforce targeting on a strictly second-strike basis. In any case, Existential Deterrence will continue to deter Soviet aggression in Europe, as it has thus far. Within this context, Limiter views range from "No-First-Use" (primarily McNamara, at least in its pure form) down to "Maintain the first use threat, but don't plan for it and do everything to avoid its implementation" (Allison, Carnesale, and Nye).
- *Arms Control.* Strive for substantial arms agreements with the Soviet Union as an essential part of overall deterrent stability and arms control.
- *The Strategic Defense Initiative.* Confine SDI to laboratory research well within the bounds of the existing Anti-Ballistic-Missile treaty, retaining the option of using missile defense as part of a more comprehensive offensive/defensive deterrence-stabilizing agreement with the Soviets.

For SDI and for general strategic planning as well, where differences in declaratory policy are greater than differences in actual targeting plans, the distinctions between the Extenders and the Limiters manifest themselves largely in budgetary choices. The Extenders would spend much more on the hardware and other necessities for multiple nuclear options.

For the Disarmers, the sole plank is:

- Get rid of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. Nothing counts unless it is a step toward that goal.

Is there a synthesis of these scattered and divergent views? Perhaps so, at least the views of the Extenders and the Limiters. Although this report is somewhat more sympathetic to the Limiters, it suggests a Limiter strategy implemented by Extender tactics: The Limiters' view

of the way the world operates is close to reality, but Existential Deterrence could be eroded to the point of failure unless many of the Extender prescriptions are taken seriously and followed.

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
SUMMARY	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xi
Section	
I. THE DEBATE	1
II. THE BACKGROUND	9
III. THE EXTENDERS	21
Analyses	22
Value Judgments	28
Policy Recommendations	31
IV. THE LIMITERS	39
Analyses	40
Value Judgments	48
Policy Recommendations	53
V. THE DISARMERS	64
Analyses	65
Policy Recommendations	68
VI. CONCLUSIONS: THE PAST AND THE FUTURE	75
The Past: Roots of the Current Debate	75
The Future: A Personal Synthesis on Where We Go From Here	84
BIBLIOGRAPHY	89

I. THE DEBATE

In the American View, [the 1972 ABM Treaty] was meant to seal a Faustian bargain with the devil of nuclear destructiveness. By the terms of this bargain, both sides had to guarantee their own devastation on a possible Judgment Day, when one side, having been attacked by the other, would want to avenge this attack. Thus, Judgment Day would never dawn.

—Fred Charles Iklé¹

Today—as often in history—the scientist is lured from his laboratory into the outer world by the attraction of power and influence. . . . In a sense, like Faust, he has sold his soul to the devil. . . . But never before have scientists dealt with . . . weapons whose use could mean the end of civilization as we know it—if not of mankind itself.

—Sidney D. Drell²

The potential inferno of nuclear war frequently evokes the Faustian metaphor, but the image of hell can be seen through many lenses. From one side of the debate over nuclear policy, Undersecretary of Defense Fred Iklé interprets the ABM Treaty as a dreadful bargain enabling us to turn our heads away from nuclear damnation at the price of making it even more damnable if we ever arrive there; from the other side, arms controller Sidney Drell invokes Goethe to describe the birth and very existence of nuclear weapons.

Theology comes naturally to the nuclear debate; this report suggests why. This section lays out the issues in the debate and discusses how these issues divide the major schools of thought. The next section gives the historical background of the issues and the schools as both have developed over the last 30 years. The current positions of the schools of thought are then analyzed in light of that history, and a concluding section discusses where we have been and where strategic nuclear policy ought to go from here.

The policy debate in the untested realm of strategic arms control and other aspects of strategic nuclear policy has shown remarkable continuity. One major reason for this is precisely *because* policy in this area is untested, indeed essentially untestable. Unlike the debate over

¹Fred Charles Iklé, "Nuclear Strategy: Can There Be a Happy Ending?" *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1985, pp. 814–815.

²Sidney D. Drell, *Facing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1983, pp. 58–60.

western arms policy toward the Third World, in which the traumatic experience of Vietnam produced evidence enough to change virtually all views substantially,³ the lack of implemented nuclear strategy since 1945 has allowed free play among premises and logical structure, all of which have been based at best on partial analogies to very different circumstances.⁴

The debaters must fall back ultimately on some kind of faith; and the resulting discussion is theological, sometimes even Manichaeian, because of the depth of the issues exemplified by the use of the Faustian image. Thirty years is a short period in theological discourse, and although the world has changed technologically and politically, the major schools of thought on strategic nuclear policy are still saying the same things about different things. Perceived shifts in the weight of evidence stemming from current events have caused some debaters to cross boundaries, moving from one school to another. Even when they do move, however, they pick up lines of argument already in existence, sometimes bringing new life to these arguments by the weight of their authority as well as their reasoning.

Policy views consist logically of *value judgments* about desirable states of the world, *analyses* of possible states, and *recommendations* about actions policymakers should take to move toward desirable outcomes within the realm of the possible.⁵ Of these constructs, recommendations—the statements about what *should* be done—ordinarily provide the most consistent basis for dividing debaters among schools of thought. Recommendations are the debaters' own summaries of their lines of logic, and to a serious policy debater (rather than an academic or philosophical thinker), where he comes out in such recommendations is more important to him and his audience than the precise reasoning by which he got there.

For purposes of analysis, the debaters are grouped into "schools of thought," a somewhat arbitrary construct; any debater worth considering is idiosyncratic, and viewpoints vary along a continuum rather than falling into discrete groups. Nonetheless, positions in most debates tend to cluster, and although the precise boundaries between the schools described here are necessarily arbitrary, these lines do delineate recognizable groupings.

³See Robert A. Levine, *The Arms Debate and the Third World: Have We Learned from Vietnam?* The RAND Corporation, R-3523-FF/CC/RC, May 1987.

⁴True, on various occasions, particularly earlier in the period, use of nuclear weapons was contemplated—the Chinese crossing of the Yalu, Dien Bien Phu, the Berlin crises of the early 1960s, the Cuban missile crisis, for example. But they were never used, and thus no test was mounted of the hypotheses of either the nuclear or the antinuclear strategists.

⁵For a fuller description of these logical constructs, see Robert A. Levine, *The Arms Debate*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1963, pp. 14–27.

The two major U.S. schools of thought on strategic arms policy—defined as major because they are closest to the decisionmaking center and thus have the greatest effect on the actual making of policy—divide primarily over two sets of recommendations:

- Whether (and in what circumstances and how) nuclear weapons should be used or threatened for any purpose other than to deter or defeat use of such weapons against American territory.
- How hard to strive for explicit agreements with the Soviet Union to control such weapons.

One school, called here the *Extenders* (for the importance they place on the extension of the role of nuclear weapons beyond the simple deterrence of their own use) stresses the need to maintain nuclear deterrence of such Soviet actions as nuclear or nonnuclear aggression against Western Europe and perhaps other “vital” areas. The Extenders believe in “thinking about the unthinkable”⁶—planning for the potential use of nuclear weapons, perhaps to fight such drastic Soviet actions, but certainly to limit damage in a nuclear war should it start, and to prevent its escalation to doomsday levels. This school does not eschew explicit arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, but its members are very suspicious of such agreements, believing that the Soviets use them primarily to gain unilateral military advantage.

The other major school, called the *Limiters* (for their belief in limiting the use of nuclear weapons to primary deterrence of nuclear attack) believes that the *only* reasonable function for nuclear weapons is to deter their own use in a world in which they exist and cannot be uninvented, and thus might go off in some circumstances. Not every member of this school brings this single-function reasoning to the point of a policy of “no first use” of nuclear weapons. This school stresses the design and negotiation of explicit agreements with the Soviet Union, not for their own sake but for their role in reinforcing stability.

A third school of thought, the *Disarmers*, is unwilling to accept any use, first or otherwise, of nuclear weapons. Whereas the Limiters accept some degree of deterrence as necessary in the world as it is and is likely to be, and want to strengthen deterrence, the Disarmers stress moving away from deterrence as fast as is feasible. Because they are further from the decisionmaking center, the Disarmers are less important to the main debate than are the two major schools, indeed less

⁶The title of an influential book by Herman Kahn, *Thinking About the Unthinkable*, Horizon Press, New York, 1962.

than they were 30 years ago. A fourth school, willing to take substantial risks of nuclear war to wipe out Communism, did exist thirty years ago; it no longer does, at least not in any form worth discussing.

The Extenders and the Limiters divide *over* their recommendations in these two central areas of nuclear use and importance of agreement *because of* the different weights they put on key value judgments and, more important, because of different world views on two overarching analytical issues.

The value judgments go back to the "Better Red or Dead?" debates of the 1950s and the 1960s, although that phraseology has disappeared because the either/or starkness led nowhere. The current debate is over the subtler issue of relative weights. Both schools agree to the unprecedented potential destructiveness of nuclear weapons. In the United States at least, neither school has the "they're just like us" view of the Soviet Union that informed some of the earlier debate; Prague and Afghanistan took care of that. Nonetheless, the preferences revealed by the Extenders' willingness to contemplate use of nuclear weapons as part of a strategy to resist Soviet threats to vital American interests, and the Limiters' doubts about such uses, do indicate real differences in the weighting of values. These values sometimes become explicit, as in Drell's reference to "weapons whose use could mean the end of civilization as we know it—if not of mankind itself," or President Reagan's language about the Soviets' "evil empire."

Such value differences are closely related to analytical views of the character and extent of each of the evils—nuclear war and Soviet world dominance. To some degree, in fact, the values may depend on the analyses, although there is some question as to which is the chicken and which the egg. Two detailed issues form the frontiers dividing the analytical views of the nuclear and Soviet dangers held by the two major schools.

- The key dividing question on views of nuclear war is whether and to what extent the use of nuclear weapons, once begun, can be controlled; and, specifically, the extent to which such use can be confined to "counterforce," avoiding both deliberate and "collateral" damage to civilian populations and other targets. Insofar as the weapons can be controlled, they can be used, including for lesser purposes than deterring enemy use of nuclears.
- The corresponding issue with regard to the Soviet Union is based on the debaters' perceptions as to the balance between aggressive ideological Soviet motivations pushing always toward imperial expansionism on the one hand, and on the other fear

parallel to our own of nuclear conflict, which, together with a desire to shift resources to civil uses, leads them toward substantial prudence. One interesting question, which neither side has addressed directly but is beginning to enter some of the serious discourse, is: What if the Soviets under Gorbachev are beginning to undergo *real* changes—changes in their attitudes toward us approximating those signalled by the Chinese in the first Nixon-Mao meeting; and, perhaps even more important, internal changes parallel to those that began in China with the death of Mao?

In addition to these two primary sets of analytical issues, three other categories are germane but, for various reasons, of lesser fundamental importance in understanding the differences between the two major schools of thought:

- Views of the “arms race” are at the cutting edge of the differences between the schools, but analyses of the nature of the race are derived largely from views of the Soviet Union. The Extenders see Soviet aggressiveness as implying that they will increase their military power regardless of what we do; the Limiters interpret the arms race as mutual reaction, one side to the other, in which they would cease or slow down if we did.
- All schools have some concern with the possibility of a nuclear accident leading to “unintended” war, and all favor steps to minimize the likelihood of both the accident and subsequent escalation. Some on the Limiters’ side believe that more nuclear weapons lead to a greater probability of such an accident; most of the Extenders (and some Limiters as well) believe that the details of nuclear control minimize the likelihood of both accident and escalation, even though they may call for more various weapons. The issue is less important as a divider between the schools than it was 25 years ago.
- One set of analyses of unquestionable importance includes those having to do with technology. The specific recommendations made at any given time are based largely on the technology of the time and what is foreseen. In terms of the debate, however, forecasts of advanced weapon technology are always highly conjectural; and even among technologists, the debaters tend to choose their technological outlooks on the basis of their other views, rather than vice versa.⁷

⁷See, for example, Robert A. Levine, “The SDI Debate as a Continuation of History,” CISA Working Paper No. 55, Center for International and Strategic Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles, March 1986, pp. 25–28.

To summarize the two major schools' views in terms of the two major paradigms—the controllability of nuclear weapons and war, and the tractability of the Soviet Union: The Extenders believe that with careful planning, nuclear (and nonnuclear) weapons can be used in a limited counterforce strategy that can limit the damage to both sides and stop the escalation spiral far short of ultimate holocaust, if war does begin between the United States and the Soviet Union. This makes plausible the extension of deterrence to other vital interests beyond simple prevention of nuclear attack upon ourselves, and such plausibility in turn makes nuclear war less likely by discouraging the initial steps. Nuclear control is thus feasible; it is also necessary because the Soviets remain ideologically dedicated to world domination in the long run, expressed as expansionism in the near term. But because the Soviets are also prudent, realistic deterrence of such expansionism is possible.

The Limiters do not refuse to think about the unthinkable. They strongly favor steps to increase the invulnerability of our nuclear retaliatory forces, and they prefer counterforce targeting of enemy military forces to targeting of populations. But they do not believe that such steps are likely to significantly control death, damage, or escalation if nuclear war does begin. It is not careful attention to detailed control that is the key to deterrence of nuclear or nonnuclear Soviet attack on U.S. vital interests, it is the uncertainties inherent in nuclear war *in spite of* all that control may (or may not) promise. These uncertainties deter both nuclear attack and initial adventurism. It is because of the uncertainties that the Soviets, although opportunistic in safer "Third World" areas and willing to probe politically in Europe, will continue, as they have for a quarter-century, to stay far from any overt military threat to Western Europe. This Soviet conservatism, plus growing felt needs to divert resources from military to civil uses, makes possible significant arms control agreements based on mutual rational self-interest.

Disagreement is by no means complete, however. Many issues germane to nuclear strategy and arms control are generally agreed upon by the members of the two major schools, and in some cases by the Disarmers too. They therefore do not enter the debate as such, and they are not dwelt upon in this analysis. Some of these issues have been more divisive at other times, or remain as dividing lines in other areas of the current arms debate:

- None of the debaters treats nuclear weapons as "normal" or in any way less than frightful and unprecedentedly dangerous. Iklé and Drell, in the quotations introducing this report, use the

Faustian metaphor to very different policy ends, but the equation of nuclear war and classical hell is appropriate for each. In the early 1960s, some debaters—a few in the Air Force and several outside—insisted that nuclear weapons were merely a different kind of munitions, frequently more cost-effective than nonnuclear ones, but this viewpoint has long been obsolete, and the importance of the “firebreak” between nonnuclear and nuclear weapons is universally recognized.

- As noted, none of the debaters treats the Soviet Union as very much like us in a value sense. In addition, analytically, no significant participants in the debate believe either that the Soviets are likely to take any great risk of nuclear war except perhaps under extreme provocation (perhaps not even under extreme temptation); or that they will refuse to pick up political opportunities handed to them with no risks beyond impotent opprobrium from portions of the non-Communist world. This too has changed over time: In the 1960s some serious and strongly anti-Communist debaters believed that the Soviet ideological drive might even lead them to risk nuclear war. The issue of the strength of the Soviet drive remains an important divider of current views on arms policy toward the Third World, however, where nuclear war does not appear as a major threat.⁸
- Nuclear arms control is an integral part of overall nuclear strategy, and it should not be confined to explicit agreements. All schools espouse various unilateral actions they believe will increase nuclear stability and bring us closer to other objectives they adduce for control.
- General agreement exists on the desirability and importance of avoiding further proliferation of nuclear weapons to nations not now having them. The debate analyzed here is largely an American one, and Americans find it easy to agree that we want as few *other* people as possible to possess nuclear capabilities. Anti-proliferation measures form part of the discussion over arms control, but not of the debate as such, except insofar as some Disarmers point out that if there were no nuclear weapons, they could not proliferate.
- At least within the two major schools, substantial weight is put on improving U.S. and NATO conventional capabilities, to avoid having to decide between defeat in Europe and escalation from conventional to nuclear warfare. This has changed little

⁸See Levine, *The Arms Debate and the Third World: Have We Learned Anything from Vietnam?*

since the 1950s; then as now none of the NATO nations was willing to pay the bill for such capabilities.

To be explicit about my own beliefs at the outset, I generally share the views of the Limiters, arriving there through a form of dialectic. My basic prejudices tend to be those of the Limiters. For reasons to be outlined in the concluding section of this report, however, I cannot dismiss the importance of the detailed controls laid out by the Extenders; but examination of the financial, military, and political opportunity costs of the Extenders' plans pushes me back toward a Limiter position.

II. THE BACKGROUND

Over the 30 years covered by this study, strategic developments and the strategic debate have moved in tandem, although by no means in lockstep. Until the late 1950s, the debate was embryonic at best, and many strategic developments went largely unrecognized, at least compared with the intense scrutiny with which such developments were examined in the 1960s and subsequently. Certainly the advent of the nuclear age in 1945 impelled a deluge of writings, but these ranged from the scientific to the high philosophical; and few bore on the strategic issues of procuring, deploying, and planning to use (or not use) nuclear weapons. Writings about arms control were largely confined to disarmament as such—reducing the numbers of nuclear weapons or getting rid of them completely—rather than the intricate discussions of the later years that emphasized prevention or control.

The postwar era began with an American monopoly of nuclear weapons. Although the Soviets broke this before long and both sides developed hydrogen weapons in the early 1950s, the unexamined American assumptions behind John Foster Dulles's "Massive Retaliation" policy were that nuclear weapons provided a very cost-effective way of containing inherent Soviet aggressiveness throughout the world, we had a lot more weapons than they did, and nuclear war would consist of U.S. attacks on Soviet cities, à la Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with our air defenses hindering their retaliation (or first strike). Massive Retaliation was highly controversial, but most of those who challenged it publicly did so on moral and philosophical grounds rather than strategic ones, which questioned feasibility or examined potential Soviet response or initiation. One major exception among early analysts was Bernard Brodie, but by himself Brodie hardly constituted a debate.¹

By the late 1950s, however, the advent of the modern missile, based on German V-2 technology at the end of World War II and dramatized by the launching of the Soviet *sputnik* in 1957, forced public questioning of the earlier, unexamined premises. It was believed in the United States, far too pessimistically as it later turned out, that the Soviets were about to overtake us in means of intercontinental delivery of nuclear warheads (the "missile gap").

¹The first several chapters of Fred Kaplan's *Wizards of Armageddon*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983, present an excellent picture of Brodie's early thinking and writing.

In fact, private reexamination of strategic premises had already been underway for several years; it began to enter the public debate by the late 1950s. Threaded throughout the discussion from then until now are the names of five analysts whose writings and actions have been seminal in the debate over the entire period: Albert Wohlstetter, Thomas Schelling, Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, and Henry Kissinger.² The earliest major contributions came from Wohlstetter and Schelling. Through the 1950s, Wohlstetter headed a RAND Corporation team that started out to optimize the U.S. strategic basing system and ended by questioning the premises on which the system was based.³ In 1959 he went public with an article the crucial point of which was that nuclear deterrence, far from being automatic, required care to make sure that the enemy did not wipe out our entire retaliatory capability in a first strike, thus leaving us naked.⁴

The problems raised by "The Delicate Balance" were considered crucial by a group of analysts that could be considered then and through the early 1960s as a single school of thought.⁵ This school has since divided over the central issue of the extension of the use of nuclear weapons beyond simple deterrence or defeat of a Soviet nuclear attack. Wohlstetter has become a leading Extender, stressing the importance of careful planning for a variety of deterrent uses and, if absolutely necessary, actual uses for nuclear weapons.

Schelling, then and still a Harvard professor of economics, can now be counted among the Limiters; but his most important initial and continuing contribution has been to set the terms of reference used by almost all of the debaters in the major schools, before and after they divided. His 1960 book, *The Strategy of Conflict*, laid out in a fairly abstract manner a set of propositions derived from economics and game theory concerning the ways opponents do and can deal with each other, and the conditions for stability in such conflicts.⁶ In 1961, he and Morton Halperin published a book that applied the propositions,

²Evaluation of individual contributions is not a purpose of this report. The five people listed are not only seminal contributors, they represent different aspects of the strategic arms debate on crucial issues at crucial times throughout the period. A fuller list of still-active major participants over a long period of time would have to include, at a minimum, Morton Halperin, George Kennan, Paul Nitze, and Henry Rowen.

³The two other major members of the team, Henry Rowen and Fred Hoffman, have also continued to be active in the debate throughout the entire period, with Hoffman being one of the developers of the strategic implications of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

⁴Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1959.

⁵Called the "Middle Marginalists" in Levine, *The Arms Debate*.

⁶Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1960.

still somewhat abstractly, to possible rules for nuclear stabilization. They stressed the then-novel idea that many arms control steps could be unilateral (e.g., protection of Side A's retaliatory forces so that A is not tempted to a first strike, particularly a *preemptive* first strike, mounted out of fear that Side B was going to go first and wipe out A's retaliatory capability), as well as multilateral in the classic treaty form.⁷

The use of nuclear weapons in both national and international patterns to strike at enemy forces rather than populations, to deter and to signal, to control and to stabilize, and to work politically without being used militarily has been the basis not only of 30 years of arms debate but of 30 years of U.S. nuclear arms policy. (One question frequently raised is whether such considerations also form the basis of Soviet policy, and if not, what the implications of the asymmetry may be.) The continuing importance of this book is indicated by Schelling and Halperin's preface to a reissued 1985 edition: "We wrote this book twenty-five years ago and are re-printing it now without any changes. . . . This study presents basic ideas that are as valid as they were twenty-five years ago."⁸ Few strategic debaters would disagree.

Although Wohlstetter and Schelling were not in substantial disagreement with one another in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they did represent a geographic division in the strategic arms debate of that time. Through 1960, the centers of the American debate were Santa Monica, where RAND is located, and Cambridge, where Schelling and others had organized the Joint Harvard-MIT Faculty Seminar on Arms Control. With the election of John Kennedy as President, many of those who had been involved in the early discussions joined the Defense Department in the new administration. From RAND came Rowen, Charles Hitch, Alain Enthoven (a junior analyst on the basing study), and later Daniel Ellsberg; from the Cambridge seminar, Bundy moved in as Kennedy's National Security Advisor, Harvard Law School Professor John McNaughton took a key Assistant Secretaryship, and Halperin later joined in a junior role. Those who remained in Santa Monica and Cambridge, including Wohlstetter and Schelling, consulted with their colleagues and others, and many of the ideas that had been incubated in academe and the "think tanks" entered directly into national policy.

⁷Thomas C. Schelling and Morton H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control*, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1961. Halperin has also remained in the debate throughout the period, in recent years as one of the intellectual leaders of the Limiters.

⁸Thomas C. Schelling and Morton H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control*, Pergamon Press, Elmsford, N.Y., 1985, p. xi.

It is a commonplace among sophisticated observers of academic/policy interaction that ideas generated on the campus enter actual policy only through the strong distorting filter of politics, if at all. Although the general rule applied to this case as to all others, the never-never abstract and theological nature of nuclear strategy combined with the Kennedy administration's suspicions of the uniformed military establishment meant that more of the raw unrefined product than usual seeped through and entered national strategy. The movie *Dr. Strangelove* satirized the strategic consultants, among others; the material was gathered largely at cocktail parties thrown for director Stanley Kubrick and author Peter George by the consultants in Cambridge and Santa Monica. The strategic views of the consultants were substantially distorted by the caricature, but the extent of their influence was not.

Robert McNamara, the third seminal contributor to the strategic arms debate, was appointed Secretary of Defense as a manager, not a strategist. He learned quickly from his new staff, notably from William Kaufmann, a consultant with deep roots in both Cambridge and Santa Monica. One thing they all soon learned was that the missile gap existed in reverse; the United States was still far ahead of the Soviet Union in delivery systems as well as warheads. This, plus the fact that we were taking steps to protect our nuclear forces—through emphasis on the sea-based portion, hardening of land-missile sites, and airborne alert for bombers—meant that it would take many first-strike missiles to kill a single retaliatory missile. Since the Soviets had many fewer, they could not strike first; and in most foreseeable circumstances, we would not. Putting a discount rather than a premium on a first strike meant the preemption fears that had preoccupied many of the academic arms controllers were ill-founded, and stability based on unilateral measures was at hand.

Another lesson was that the plans set forth in the early 1950s for a massive conventional defense of Western Europe to be mounted by the NATO nations were seen by the nations at risk as far too costly to put into place; American nuclear deterrence of Soviet invasion of Western Europe, nuclear or nonnuclear, was still considered basic. The political road to nuclear war remained dangerously open, and the Berlin crises of the first year of the Kennedy administration led Kennedy, McNamara, and the Defense Department to think very seriously about the use of nuclear weapons. In October of 1962, the Cuban missile crisis again stimulated serious consideration of "what if" we had to use the weapons, and many (but not all) analysts believed that our ability to do so made an important contribution to the successful resolution of the crisis. The two years of crises in 1961 and 1962 confirmed the

belief in the need for containing the aggressive hostility of the Soviet Union. By 1963, however, the resolution of the missile crisis made possible the first significant arms control agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Atmospheric Test Ban Treaty. The treaty had little to do with stability as such, however, and few analysts thought that it implied more than a tactical change in the relations between the two superpowers.

All these events led to very concrete planning as well as thinking about the uses of nuclear weapons. McNamara was the swing man. Initially, he adopted the ideas of the nuclear strategists with whom he surrounded himself. In a still-famous 1962 speech made in Ann Arbor, Michigan, he contended that our "principal military objectives, in the event of a nuclear war stemming from a major attack on the [NATO] Alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, not of his civilian population."⁹ In other speeches and statements made earlier in the year he espoused the "city-avoidance" counterforce theory of nuclear targeting, both as a common-sense humanitarian philosophy and as a strategy for using the threat of nuclear attack (or additional echelons of attack after the first exchange) as a bargaining device, particularly in a NATO context.¹⁰

The Ann Arbor speech was the high water mark of "declaratory" counterforce policy in the 1960s. Five years later, toward the end of his tenure as Secretary of Defense, McNamara stressed not the details of bargaining, but the pure deterrent functions of nuclear weapons used as a threat of near-total devastation to the enemy: "Now it is imperative to understand that assured destruction is the very essence of the whole deterrence concept. . . . It means the certainty of suicide to the aggressor—not merely to his military forces but to his society as a whole."¹¹ This was not the "Mutual Assured Destruction" ("MAD") that the Extenders contend deliberately puts our population at risk to Soviet attack—the Faustian bargain decried by Iklé—but it is a major move away from the details of counterforce and nuclear bargaining. It moved McNamara toward the Limiters' school, signalling a crucial

⁹Robert S. McNamara, "Defense Arrangements of the North Atlantic Community," *Department of State Bulletin*, July 9, 1962, p. 67.

¹⁰See the many quotes from McNamara in 1962, in William W. Kaufmann, *The McNamara Strategy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1964, Ch. 2, "The Search for Options." Kaufmann had drafted the Ann Arbor speech and many of the others.

¹¹Robert S. McNamara, "The Dynamics of Nuclear Strategy," *Department of State Bulletin*, October 9, 1967, pp. 443–444. The speech was drafted by Morton Halperin, then in the Defense Department. Halperin, by then on his way to becoming a strong Limiter, shifted to the National Security Council staff in the first year of the Nixon administration, where he was so strange an anomaly that his phone was tapped by his superiors before he quit.

change in the strategic arms debate, the development of the Limiters as more than a tolerated loyal opposition considered to be lightweights within the policy establishment. And it earned the strong and continuing opposition of Wohlstetter and others who remained steadfast Extenders.

The change was, in fact, primarily in *declaratory* policy—what was *said* about nuclear weapons and plans. The actual nuclear strategy of the United States, once McNamara achieved control of it early in his tenure, emphasized the targeting of enemy military forces, not populations. This shifted only marginally back and forth as McNamara revised his views and, indeed, has remained relatively constant through various changes in declaratory emphasis from then until now. McNamara has not written of the events that led him to shift his emphasis; others have speculated. Perhaps the demonstration in Vietnam that detailed calculations do not always work out precisely as planned had something to do with it.¹² Within the strategic nuclear realm itself, events had moved away from the comfortable stability of “it takes more than one to kill one” of the theorists of a few years earlier. The Soviets had begun to build very large warheads, and many of them, which put even well-protected hard sites at additional risk. Perhaps more important, however, the advent of MIRV, the Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle, meant that one missile with a lot of warheads could kill more than one enemy missile in a silo, and the equation was reversed toward a new premium on a first strike.

It is not clear to what extent MIRV was a reaction to the then developing Anti-Ballistic-Missile (ABM) capability, to what extent ABM was a reaction to MIRV, or whether perhaps both were results of the inexorable advance of military technology. McNamara was dubious about ABM, going along with the concept of its development on the questionable rationale of the need for a defense against Chinese missiles. What is clearer from his 1967 speech, however, is that the action-reaction arms race typified by MIRV and ABM had been one factor leading him to shift away from the stress on detailed counterforce. He had begun to believe that such details could lead to no conclusion.

The ABM itself became a major—perhaps the major—factor in the debate in the late 1960s. The Soviets had been working on the system throughout most of the 1960s. Some Americans believed this to be a part of the general Soviet attempt to achieve a strategic advantage, but others suggested a strong Soviet bias toward defense because of the

¹²For a discussion of the evolution of McNamara's views on Vietnam, see the chapter on “The Noninterventionist Middle” in Levine, *The Arms Debate and the Third World: Have We Learned from Vietnam?*

traumas of World War II, as illustrated by the massive Soviet investment in air defense. In any case, knowledge of the Soviet efforts led to pressure for similar U.S. systems.

In a debate with many similarities to the more recent one over SDI (but lacking any discussion of the possibility of an absolute hard-shell protection of the United States set forth in President Reagan's more recent dream), the Extenders favored ABM as one more tool to sophisticate the American nuclear arsenal and strategy. Most of the Limiters opposed it, primarily on the basis that an effective ABM would be destabilizing because it could be taken as an effort to allow a U.S. first strike by protecting targets in this country from ragged Soviet retaliation against such a strike.

Then as now, the Extenders accused ABM opponents of espousing the "MAD" strategy of deliberately putting the U.S. population at risk.¹³ And a sharp controversy over the use and misuse of data arose between Wohlstetter and three Limiters—George Rathjens, Steven Weinberg, and Jerome Wiesner. Wohlstetter brought the matter before the Operations Research Society of America (ORSA), and after due investigation an ORSA committee and the organization's council decided in his favor. The Limiters contended that any analytical errors they had made were based on irregular release of relevant data by the Defense Department. More important for understanding the differences between the Extenders and the Limiters as they persist today, however, Wohlstetter believed strongly that precise calculations relating to nuclear exchange were crucial to the design of offensive and defensive postures; Rathjens, Weinberg, and Wiesner argued, "The scope of the inquiry outlined by Mr. Wohlstetter is far too narrow. Any even-handed inquiry ought to look in considerable detail into the arguments and analyses offered by members of the Administration. . . . It should examine not only the technical details of these statements."¹⁴ Their point was that the role of ABM in deterrence and stability depended much more on broad strategic and political considerations than on precision of quantitative detail. This difference

¹³In a 1973 article, for example, "Can Nuclear Deterrence Last Out the Century?" in *Foreign Affairs* of January 1973, Fred Iklé, then Nixon administration Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, opened the line of argument for which he later used the Faustian metaphor.

¹⁴Letter to T. E. Caywood of ORSA from George W. Rathjens, Steven Weinberg, and Jerome B. Wiesner, reproduced in U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Security and International Operations, Senate Committee on Government Operations, *Planning-Programming-Budgeting-Defense Analysis: Two Examples*, Washington, D.C., 1969, pp. 1250-1251. The Senate Committee print includes all of the documents in the controversy.

between the schools remains crucial today in the arguments over counterforce and the appropriate uses of nuclear weapons.

For a variety of reasons, rather than becoming another stride in the arms race, ABM development in the late 1960s and early 1970s provided an opportunity for the first U.S.-Soviet arms control agreement. Unlike the Atmospheric Test Ban Treaty, it potentially affected the stability of the nuclear arms balance for better or for worse. The arguments of the Limiters undoubtedly had some effect in encouraging U.S. acceptance of the ABM Treaty signed in 1972. Perhaps more important, however, were President Nixon's political imperatives (and perhaps similar pressures on Brezhnev). And a major permissive factor was that useful deployment of the ABM proved difficult enough that, even after the Treaty was signed permitting one ABM complex each to the United States and the Soviet Union, we soon abandoned our efforts as being insufficiently cost-effective given the technology of the times, and strategically meaningless.

Together with the ABM limitations, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) of 1972 put the first limitations on offensive missiles.¹⁵ Lawrence Freedman characterizes the basic bargain of SALT: "Implicit in the agreement was a trade of Soviet numerical superiority in missiles for U.S. superiority in technology and bombers."¹⁶ The Extenders detested this tradeoff, the more so because it allowed the Soviets to multiply their advantage by putting more MIRVed warheads on their heavier missiles. In any case, SALT, signed in 1972, became SALT I, as an interim SALT II imposing further limits on bomber delivery systems in addition to missiles was negotiated, again over the strong opposition of the Extenders.

Deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations, largely because of Soviet aggression in Afghanistan, meant that President Carter never presented SALT II to the Senate for ratification. It was then disowned but its limitations observed through Thanksgiving of 1986, by President Reagan. Although such atmospherics of U.S.-Soviet relations had an important positive effect on making the ABM Treaty and SALT I possible in 1972, and a major negative effect in making ratification of SALT II impossible in 1979, they bore little relationship to longer-run and more fundamental U.S. views of the Soviet Union. Most Americans' views remained in the range bounded at one end by the belief that the Soviets would remain highly aggressive and attempt to increase their military power no matter what we did (the Extenders'

¹⁵The ABM Treaty is sometimes considered part of SALT, sometimes a separate entity.

¹⁶Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1981, p. 357.

view) and at the other end by the belief that Soviet aggressiveness was tempered by prudence and a desire to shift resources away from the arms race, with their military posture designed in substantial measure in reaction to our own (the Limiters).

To a great extent, the "Détente" of the early 1970s had been the handiwork of Henry Kissinger, the fifth of the major voices in the arms debate. Kissinger differed from the others less in viewpoint than in frame of reference. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, his policy recommendations as a member of the Cambridge branch of the consulting debaters put him well within the establishment consensus that included Schelling, Wohlstetter, McNamara, and everyone else who aspired to have a real effect on real policy. When McNamara and others veered off toward the Limiter school, Kissinger remained an Extender and, in spite of his Detente/SALT aberration—which has recently brought him into a sharp confrontation over history with Henry Rowen,¹⁷ a confrontation so esoteric as to be very difficult for an outsider to follow—he remains an Extender.

Unlike the other three, and, indeed, unlike most of the contributors to the strategic nuclear portion of the overall arms debate (Brodie is another exception), Kissinger took a primarily *political* view of the issues. From the 1950s, he concentrated more on the effects of potential or actual use of nuclear weapons on world power structures than on the logic and arithmetic of nuclear exchange. In 1957, he espoused a "limited" nuclear war strategy in Europe, contrasting it to Dulles's Massive Retaliation as a better instrument to protect our real interests in Western Europe.¹⁸ A few years later, he changed this view toward conventional defense, not Massive Retaliation, but he continued to promote the concept that nuclear and other weapons were instruments in an essentially political conflict between the superpowers.¹⁹ Political conflict might lead to nuclear war, and it was to the political sphere that we must look to prevent such war as well as to promote our own interests. Kissinger's Ph.D. dissertation had been about the post-Napoleonic balance-of-power stability created in Europe by Metternich and Castlereagh, and his objective, as writer and later as public official, was to reproduce that kind of stability in the world, without sacrificing U.S. interests. His early writings, his activities in office, and his current columns and comments have added an important real-world political dimension to the strategic debate.

¹⁷See Henry S. Rowen, "The Old SALT Gang Returns," *Wall Street Journal*, November 2, 1984; and Henry A. Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft, "Old Wine in New Bottles," *Wall Street Journal*, November 12, 1984.

¹⁸Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1957.

¹⁹Henry A. Kissinger, *The Necessity for Choice*, Harper and Row, New York, 1960.

Because of his different way of thinking, Kissinger had become something of an outsider in Washington and among the academic debaters after the first year or two of the Kennedy administration. When Nixon made him National Security Advisor and then Secretary of State, he directed much of his early effort toward such nonnuclear issues as Vietnam, the Middle East, and China; but he was central in creating the atmosphere of detente with the Soviet Union that made the ABM Treaty and SALT I possible. He was a key negotiator on the treaties, but preparation of U.S. positions on the precise numbers and definitions was more within the realm of the Department of Defense.

SALT I and the ABM Treaty were consistent with the stress on assured destruction as the central deterrent to strategic nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union that McNamara had begun in the previous administration. In 1974, however, James Schlesinger, a RAND alumnus and Extender analyst in good standing (and a Harvard College classmate of Kissinger), became Secretary of Defense. Schlesinger moved declaratory policy back toward the emphasis on selectivity, counterforce, and potential bargaining, and away from the sole objective of deterrence of attack upon ourselves. His aim, he told the House Armed Services Committee, was "that the President of the United States, under conditions in which there is a major assault against the interests of the United States or its allies, will have strategic options other than the destruction of the society and the urban industrial base of the society attacking us."²⁰

At the same time, however, SALT II, which the Extenders believed put additional limits on U.S. capabilities to actually implement such a selective strategy, was agreed to in principle by President Ford and Chairman Brezhnev; it took several more years to negotiate the details, and by the time it was ready to present to the Senate for ratification, President Carter decided not to do so because of Afghanistan. The Extenders believed that SALT I and the ABM Treaty, abetted by the defense budget cutbacks of the first Carter years, had allowed the Soviets to take a giant step toward catching up to us in strategic capabilities and laying the groundwork to surpass us dangerously. The Limiters too agree that effective "parity" was the condition coming out of the 1970s, but the Extenders' attribution of causation to U.S. carelessness and political error is far more controversial. To the Limiters, the American strategic dominance that lasted at least through the early

²⁰James Schlesinger, testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, *Military Posture and Procurement of Aircraft, Missiles, Tracked Combat Vehicles, Torpedoes and Other Weapons*—Title I, H.R. 12564, Part 1 of "Hearings on Military Posture, Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1975," Washington, D.C., 1974, p. 46.

1960s was inherently transitory and convergence between the superpowers inevitable. Their belief all along has been that "strategic superiority" is militarily meaningless in the nuclear age and is therefore politically useless.

Nobody interested in nuclear arms control and stability was very happy with the years after 1972. The two major schools attributed the slowing of progress and the decline of hopes to rather different causes, however. Two thoughtful analysts, one from each school, have summed up their own discontent. Paul Nitze, an Extender who has been in the thick of arms control negotiations and debates since the Kennedy administration, lays the blame on continuing Soviet efforts to squeeze out the last drop of advantage:

From 1972, when the Soviets passed the United States in number, size, and throwweight of offensive missile systems, they proceeded to develop and deploy one generation after another of more modern systems. . . . Once the Soviets judged the military correlation of forces had become favorable, they were adamant in refusing to consider any agreement which would result in rough equality or which would improve crisis stability.²¹

Schelling presents a Limiters' view of the same years and events. In addition to criticizing U.S. and Soviet arms control positions that he believes substituted mindless numerical limitations on weapons for consideration of their stabilizing or destabilizing characteristics, Schelling attacks the counterforce doctrine that he sees as the central U.S. strategic concept of those years:

Since 1972, the control of strategic weapons has made little or no progress, and the effort on our side has not seemed to be informed by any coherent theory of what arms control is supposed to accomplish. . . . Ten years ago, late in the Nixon administration, secretaries of defense began to pronounce a new doctrine for the selection of nuclear weapons. This doctrine entailed a more comprehensive target system than anything compatible with the McNamara doctrine. . . . What has happened is that a capacity to maintain *control* over the course of war has come to be identified with a vigorous and extended *counterforce* campaign, while *retaliatory targeting* has been identified with what Herman Kahn used to call "spasm."²²

The onset of the Reagan administration in the 1980s moved strategic concepts firmly into the hands of the Extenders. From 1981 to 1983, the dominant theme was simply the procurement of *more*

²¹Paul Nitze, "The Objectives of Arms Control," *Current Policy* No. 677, Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., March 28, 1985, p. 5.

²²Thomas C. Schelling, "What Went Wrong with Arms Control," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1985/86, pp. 224-230.

strategic weapons—B-1 bombers and large MIRVed MX missiles in silos. The Limiters' proposal for the small single-warhead Midgetman missile, with mobility intended to preserve the retaliatory capabilities of the land-based leg of the triad, has been opposed by some in the administration because a single warhead is not cost-effective: It provides less bang for a buck. Multiple warheads, however, would make more difficult the mobility that is central to the Limiters' retaliatory objective; and that plus the multiplicity itself would imply to them a first-strike stress.

In any case, President Reagan's speech of March 23, 1983 introducing the Strategic Defense Initiative changed the subject matter of the debate substantially. Even though the President's firm and continuing espousal of a concept almost nobody else believed feasible—a near-perfect defense of U.S. population against all enemy missiles—added a great deal of confusion to the debate,²³ most of the lines between Extenders and Limiters held.

More recently the proposals made or not made by both sides at the Reykjavik pseudo-summit meeting have added more confusion. Both Reagan and Gorbachev made proposals beyond the previous positions of their nations. Both drew back. But at least in the case of the United States, the President's apparent leapfrogging of not only some of his Extender advisors but even some Limiter positions led to both a few tentative shifts in the details of the debate and doubts about whether the Presidential position was real.

Although the strategic arms control and other policies of the United States are in substantial flux, the main thrust of the debate remains constant, as it has since the 1950s.

²³See Levine, "The SDI Debate as a Continuation of History," pp. 1-6.

III. THE EXTENDERS

Everyone sensible in the West assigns primacy to deterring nuclear war. . . . The questions are how best to deter, whether that can be done without using apocalyptic threats, and whether we have to surrender freedom if deterrence fails. Nor should there be any issue about the West's need to rely less on nuclear weapons to deter a *nonnuclear* attack. . . . Are we more likely to deter an attack by improving our ability to answer with the destruction of military targets rather than innocent bystanders, and by keeping the conflict under gross control? Or by making any nuclear war in which the West takes part as horrible as possible even if it means ending civilization and possibly the species? I have for many years advocated the first course. But that by no means implies that I think a war, even a non-nuclear war, is likely to be fought neatly [and] cleanly. . . . The *live* issue is whether we should be trying to increase or to decrease our ability to discriminate between military and civilian targets and to confine destruction to the military.

—Albert Wohlstetter¹

The “ability to discriminate” among targets, to “confine destruction to the military” insofar as possible, and to avoid having “to surrender freedom if deterrence fails” are at the center of the Extenders’ thinking about nuclear weapons and war and have been for many years. The Extenders see nuclear war as conceivable in spite of all best efforts, and they want to keep it as limited as possible if it does come; their value system suggests that it may be necessary to risk it or even to use nuclear weapons first in case of an extreme threat to freedom, but their analytical system implies that a willingness to take such risks reduces the risks themselves. All this contributes to world nuclear stability; therefore it is arms control. Arms control agreements as such are evaluated skeptically, for their contribution to this discriminating posture.

¹Albert Wohlstetter, “Between an Unfree World and None: Increasing our Choices,” *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1985, pp. 989–990.

ANALYSES

The Extenders pride themselves on cool analysis; the reasoning behind their conclusions starts with their analyses of what can be done, rather than their value judgments about where we want to go. The two main analytical roots are:

- We can limit damage in nuclear war, both by care in mounting our own nuclear strikes and defending against the enemy's, and by deterring escalation to larger strikes.
- Politically and strategically, the Soviet Union uses and will continue to use actual or potential military force to achieve its objectives, but it does so in a prudent pattern that we can deal with realistically if we examine it without illusions.

Damage limitation depends on defense and "intra-war deterrence." Since March 1983 when President Reagan introduced his plans for SDI, much of the discussion of limiting damage in nuclear war has revolved around the contribution of ABM defenses. The concept of defensive damage limitation, however, does not depend solely upon shooting down incoming missiles. Even lacking such a capability, other defensive measures are feasible and, in the view of the Extenders, desirable. According to Samuel Huntington, who had been on the staff of the National Security Council during the Carter administration:

The United States needs to expand its ability to protect its leadership and population. . . . [In] 1978 . . . President Carter approved PD-41 authorizing planning for the evacuation of U.S. cities in the event of a nuclear (or other comparable) emergency. . . . In addition, it would be wise for the administration to launch a serious study of the possibility of providing hardened shelters for a portion of the urban population. . . . [The] Carter administration also directed that measures be taken to enhance the survivability of U.S. leadership, provide for the continuity of government, and protect U.S. command, control, and communications facilities.²

More important than defense as such (with the possible exception of SDI), however, is the ability to use offensive nuclear weapons in a discriminating manner ourselves, to limit damage to the enemy and induce him to respond in kind—through graduated deterrence, carried out once a war has started and implemented by careful control of our actions even in the midst of a nuclear exchange. Wohlstetter contends:

²Samuel P. Huntington, "The Renewal of Strategy," in Samuel P. Huntington (ed.), *The Strategic Imperative*, Ballinger, Cambridge, Mass., 1982, p. 39.

We should be prepared to use discriminating offense, strategies, tactics and precise weapons with reduced yields and deliberately confined effects—such as weapons that penetrate and explode deep beneath rather than at the surface of the earth close to an underground military target; and to direct our weapons at the military rather than at bystanders—to select targets of a sort, number and location that will accomplish an important military purpose and yet contain the destruction. . . . Among the most revolutionary changes in precision that are in process, some will permit one or a few non-nuclear warheads effectively to destroy a variety of military targets which previously had been thought of as susceptible only to nuclear attack or to huge non-nuclear raids.³

Neither Wohlstetter nor any of the other Extenders, however, contends that precision by itself will suffice to limit damage once war between the United States and the Soviet Union has begun. Rather, the key is to use the precision and discrimination to control escalation, and thus confine even a nuclear conflict to levels far below the megaton holocaust feared by everyone. According to Richard Burt, who shortly after writing this became Assistant Secretary of State in the Reagan administration, and later Ambassador to West Germany:

The threat of escalation will continue to provide both sides with incentives for exercising restraint in local conflicts. But the degree of Soviet restraint will depend, in large part, on American possession of non-suicidal options for escalation. Accordingly, a new emphasis must be placed on generating nuclear responses that are militarily meaningful—that is, nuclear responses that can effectively deny, as well as deter, the Soviet Union from achieving both limited and expansive military objectives.⁴

None of this comes with a guarantee, but it has a good chance and must be tried. As put by Colin Gray: "Counterforce/damage limitation theorists do not exclude the possibility that catastrophe might occur. . . . They argue that [a lesser strategy] guarantees unlimited catastrophe, while their preference at least holds open the hope of containing the scale of potential damage."⁵

Most of the Extenders argue that such sophisticated planning for nuclear exchange at all levels actually makes nuclear war less likely because it leaves the Soviets with no illusions about taking risk-free action against us. Wohlstetter criticizes Father Brian Hehir, staff director of the committee that drafted the American Catholic bishops'

³Wohlstetter, "Between an Unfree World and None," pp. 990-992.

⁴Richard Burt, "The Relevance of Arms Control in the 1980s," *Daedalus*, Winter 1981 (issue on "U.S. Defense Policy in the 1980s"), p. 170.

⁵Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and Strategic Planning*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 62.

statement on nuclear deterrence,⁶ for turning deterrence into a dangerously obvious illusion that might lead to war. Wohlstetter's interpretation of Father Hehir's view is that "to deter nuclear attack, we must *convince* other nations that our 'determination to use nuclear weapons is beyond question' [but] We should never intend to use nuclear weapons." Wohlstetter's comment is that: "Precisely how this volubly revealed deception is to fool allies and adversaries 'beyond question' has not itself been revealed."⁷

Rather than permitting such illusions, Nitze argues for:

The objectives of assuring parity, or at least rough equivalence between the capabilities of the two sides, and of assuring crisis stability. . . . [Our] military forces as a whole must have the necessary characteristics of effectiveness, flexibility, survivability, and diversity to dissuade the Soviet Union from contemplating reckless action.⁸

Not all Extenders would agree. Gray criticizes both stability and parity as being too weak:

The principal intellectual culprit in our pantheon of false strategic gods is the concept of stability. . . . If it is true, or at least probable, that central war could be won or lost, then it has to follow that the concept of strategic superiority should be revived in popularity in the West.⁹

Most Extenders would agree with Nitze, however: accepting parity and stability as the best that we can obtain under existing political and other constraints, but fearing that Western carelessness can lead to instability if we fall into inferiority.

This first premise of the Extenders—that the technology and other conditions for control of nuclear warfare make stability possible through precise discrimination and escalation control—comes together with their second premise—that the objectives and strategy of the Soviet Union make such measures necessary—to form the analytical basis for their strategic views.

The Limiters as well as the Extenders assume that the Soviets continue to seek opportunities for expansion of their power and their

⁶National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, Washington, D.C., 1983. The bishops' statement itself does not express the deter-yes/use-never view Wohlstetter attributes to Father Hehir.

⁷Albert Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists on the Bombing of Innocents," *Commentary*, June 1983, p. 16.

⁸Nitze, "The Objectives of Arms Control," p. 2.

⁹Colin Gray, "Nuclear Strategy: The Case for a Theory of Victory," *International Security*, Summer 1979, pp. 82-86.

ideology across most of the debate. The two analytical questions for strategic nuclear policy are: How strong an expansive push? How will they pursue it? The Extenders answer the questions: still too strong, and too military, for us to risk anything based on any presumed change in Soviet ways. Wohlstetter describes the balance between Soviet prudence and Soviet aggressiveness: "We and the Soviets share an interest in avoiding mutual suicide. . . . But the Soviets also have interests in expanding their influence and control and, in the process, destabilizing the West, if necessary by the use of external force rather than simply by manipulating internal dissension."¹⁰

And, concluding a comprehensive analysis of Soviet strategy written shortly before he joined the U.S. State Department, John Van Oudenaren summarizes the Soviet attitude well into the Gorbachev era:

It is disturbing that, for whatever reasons, the top leadership of the past 15 years has identified the general interests of the Soviet state with continued high levels of military expenditure, and that, even in retrospect, it seems reasonably satisfied with the return on its investment. Soviet military power is credited with "sobering" the U.S. and compelling it to accept detente, with accelerating the rise of "progressive" forces in the Third World, and generally with preserving world peace and hence permitting the continuation of Communist construction.¹¹

Soviet nuclear and other military strategy does not consist of a clear and agreed set of "if . . . then" steps, however. Different Extenders have interpreted Soviet nuclear strategy in substantially different ways. Richard Pipes, a Harvard Sovietologist and alumnus of the Reagan National Security Council, contends that the Soviet General Staff's "strategy for the contingency of war [for the last thirty years] has called for massive preemptive strikes against the U.S. deterrents, accompanied by defensive measures to protect Soviet forces and civilians from U.S. retaliation."¹² Such a Soviet strategy might lead to a U.S. emphasis on defenses of our own, but it would not be conducive toward Wohlstetter's discriminate American strategy. Wohlstetter, in fact, argues that the Soviets want us to believe in their massive-attack strategy, but only in the interests of misleading us; their real strategy is much like that he recommends for the United States:

¹⁰Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists," p. 34.

¹¹John Van Oudenaren, *Deterrence, War-fighting and Soviet Military Doctrine*, Adelphi Papers 210, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1986, p. 41.

¹²Richard Pipes, "Call Iceland What It Was—a Trap," *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1986, Part II, p. 5.

When the Soviets talk primarily for Western ears, they indicate that if they ever attack they will do so massively and indiscriminately, even if it means the end of the world—either to frighten us into believing that it is futile to prepare to use nuclear weapons even in response to their use of nuclear weapons, or to lull us into believing they would never use them. Or both. Such Soviet statements are in good part disinformation. . . .

When Soviet military planners write primarily to inform each other, they may demonstrate an interest both in using force “massively,” that is “decisively,” to accomplish a key military purpose, and in using force selectively so as not to defeat that or any wider purpose. . . . The development of their military forces confirms this double interest. They are increasingly capable of selecting some targets to be immobilized or destroyed with important military effect while leaving others essentially untouched. They have been moving toward more precise, lower-yield weapons. . . . Moreover . . . their force development shows a strong interest in keeping the battle under *their* control.¹³

Moreover, Wohlstetter reinforces his arguments for a discriminating U.S. strategy by contending that the value system of the Soviet leadership makes a counterforce threat to their power a stronger deterrent than any massive threat to Soviet populations:

One need not assume that Soviet values are the same as our own; nor that the Soviets are simply monsters who don't care or even like to see civilians killed. We need only observe that the Soviets value military power and the means of domination at least as much and possibly more than the lives of Russian civilians. This is surely evidenced by a long history . . . in which the Soviets have sacrificed civilian lives for the sake of Soviet power. Their collectivization program in the 1920s gained control over the peasants at the expense of slaughtering some 12-15 million of them. . . . The Soviet government sharply increased grain exports during the famine year of 1933, when 5 million Ukrainian peasants were dying. If Robert Conquest is right, the Great Purge of the late 1930s killed several million more Soviet citizens. If Nikolai Tolstoy is right, Stalin and the NKVD were responsible for more than half of the 20-30 million deaths suffered by the Soviets during World War II. . . .

Whatever else one may say of these actions, they do not suggest that Soviet leaders value the life of Russian citizens above political and military power.¹⁴

This harsh picture of the Soviets' military objectives carries over to the ways in which they utilize negotiations. Nitze and other Extenders frequently quote Carter administration Secretary of Defense Harold

¹³Wohlstetter, “Between an Unfree World and None,” pp. 981-982.

¹⁴Wohlstetter, “Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists,” p. 27.

Brown (in terms of his current recommendations and other views, a Limiter) "When we build, they build. When we don't build, they build."¹⁵ Indeed, they continue to build even in violation of existing treaties.

These views of Soviet objectives and strategic and negotiating postures extend to another analytical issue, albeit one considered much more important by the Limiters than the Extenders—the arms race. The "we build, they build; we don't, they build" view cited above summarizes much of what the Extenders think about the arms race: The one thing worse than a two-sided arms race would be a one-sided race—the Russians only. Nitze has been quoted above as contending that the Soviets raced unilaterally in building delivery systems in the 1970s; a Defense Department study group on SDI, headed by Fred Hoffman, who had been one of Wohlstetter's associates in the 1950s RAND studies, adds another dimension:

The public in the United States and other Western countries is increasingly anxious about the danger of nuclear war and the prospects for a supposedly unending nuclear arms race. Those expressing this anxiety, however, frequently ignore the fact that the U.S. nuclear stockpile has been declining, both in numbers and in megatons, while Soviet forces have increased massively in both.¹⁶

Beyond this, however, the Extenders look very skeptically at arms reduction agreements. Still within the framework created by Schelling and Halperin in 1961, "Whether the most promising areas of arms control involve reductions in certain kinds of military force [or] increases in certain kinds of military force . . . we prefer to treat as an open question,"¹⁷ Nitze carefully introduces a crucial adjective into a paragraph endorsing arms reductions: "Significant reductions in *destabilizing* systems can be crucially important to enhancing stability."¹⁸ Stability, not an increase or decrease in the number of weapons, is the key. And in regard to one of the "tentative accords" reached between Reagan and Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Kissinger argues that: "Grotesque as it may sound to the layman, a 50 percent cut of strategic

¹⁵Nitze, "The Objectives of Arms Control," p. 5.

¹⁶Fred S. Hoffman, Study Director, *Ballistic Missile Defenses and U.S. National Security: Summary Report*, U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., October 1983, pp. 5–6.

¹⁷Schelling and Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control* (1961 edition), p. 2.

¹⁸Paul H. Nitze, "SDI: Its Nature and Rationale," *Department of State Bulletin*, December 1985, p. 71. Italics added.

forces would not ease the growing vulnerability of land-based missiles. It would increase the vulnerability of sea-based forces.”¹⁹

Because of fears of not racing and thereby losing, and ambiguities associated with the reduction of arms, although the Extenders do not endorse arms races, they consider the issue much less important than do the Limiters. Another similar issue—important to many Limiters, much less so to Extenders—is the possibility of nuclear accident. Extenders have endorsed or, when in power, sometimes initiated many devices designed to lessen the risk of accidents or the risk of escalatory response if accidents occur; the Permissive Action Link for strong central control over nuclear weapons and the Washington-Moscow “hot line” are two examples. And, as has been noted, one of the Extenders’ central considerations is control over escalation, including escalation of a conflict beginning with unintentional launch or other nuclear accident. The possibility of the initial accident is not considered very important to the design of nuclear strategy or the desirability of arms control, however, and is not written about.

VALUE JUDGMENTS

The emphasis on control over escalation in case of accident or any other first step in nuclear exchange is consistent with the Extenders’ overall analytical emphasis on detailed steps for control at all levels; it is also consistent with their value emphases. The Extenders of course want to avoid nuclear war. But their two key value judgments match their two key analytical premises. One relates to control, the other to the Soviets:

- Limiting damage in a nuclear exchange, should one occur, is an important thing to do. Their analyses indicate that it is *possible* to reduce the number of deaths in a nuclear war, e.g., from 200 million to 20 million; their value judgments stress that on grounds of morality planning to do so *should* be a major policy consideration.
- It is worthwhile to defend the Western world against Communism. Were the “Better Red than Dead” distinction at all meaningful, the truth would be somewhere in the middle. (In the current debate over nuclear strategy, the Limiters would also agree to the same statement. This was not always true in

¹⁹Henry A. Kissinger, “A Formula from Reykjavik: Arms Proposals Full of Peril,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1986, Part V, p.1.

the past, however,²⁰ and it is not true now in areas of the arms debate other than the realm of nuclear strategy.)

The worth of defending the United States and Western Europe against Communism is, in fact, seldom singled out for mention by the Extenders precisely because it is so uncontroversial as to make any discussion gratuitous. Wohlstetter's piece, "Between an Unfree World and None," mentions the "Unfree World" only in the title, not in the body of the article.²¹ His litany, quoted above, of Soviet leadership sins against their own people, certainly indicates a strong distaste for their mode of governance, but he presents the list to argue about the Soviet value system he believes we should target, not as a moral indictment.

It was not always thus. In the early 1960s a major debate was mounted between such Disarmers as Bertrand Russell, who was reputed to have coined the "Better Red than Dead" slogan, and opposing philosophers such as Sidney Hook, who found it necessary to argue passionately that: "Intelligent fear is aware that not only is there a danger of nuclear holocaust, *there is also as great a danger of Communist takeover and destruction of free society.*"²² Such views today might come from an Extender or a Limiter; even most Disarmers have been wise enough to join the consensus that the idea is to avoid both disasters rather than choosing between them. In areas of the current arms debate more removed from nuclear fears, however, the old passions still exist. Indeed, in the debate over U.S. arms policy in the third world, compared with the situation of 30 years ago, the memory of Vietnam has intensified the emotional content. And because the stakes are less than in the strategic nuclear area—little fear of holocaust on the one side and little danger of Communist hegemony over civilized people like us and the West Europeans and the Japanese on the other—it is possible for the debaters to indulge these passions.²³

In the strategic realm, however, the passions of the Extenders are reserved for the other of their two major values, the importance of damage limitation. The weight they put on the absolute morality of preventing the worst, should nuclear war occur, can be measured by the opprobrium they heap on those Limiters whom they believe want to maintain a high level of potential damage because they think it will help deter the initiation of such war. The Limiters' own views are discussed below, but the Extenders' views of those views are indicated by

²⁰See Levine, *The Arms Debate*, particularly Ch. 5.

²¹Wohlstetter, "Between a Free World and None."

²²Sidney Hook, "Escape from Reality," *The New Leader*, May 29, 1961, p. 12.

²³See Levine, *The Arms Debate and the Third World: Have We Learned Anything from Vietnam?*

Iklé's Faustian metaphor which began this report, and by continued assault on the "MAD" image:

Wohlstetter:

John Newhouse succinctly stated . . . the "frosty apothegm": "Offense is defense, defense is offense. Killing people is good, killing weapons is bad." The late Donald Brennan . . . was not sympathetic. He noted that the acronym for Mutual Assured Destruction—MAD—described that Orwellian dogma.²⁴

Hoffman:

[T]he MAD doctrine . . . holds that to deter nuclear attack we must threaten deliberately to kill innocent Soviet civilians; consequently deterrence depends only on the destructiveness of offensive forces used in retaliation for Soviet attack.²⁵

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger:

True believers in the disproven MAD concept hold that the prime, if not the only, objective of the strategic nuclear forces of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union is the ability to destroy each other's cities.²⁶

Not all Extenders feel comfortable using the MAD image. Gray suggests that "The politically effective acronym MAD . . . is not helpful for constructive debate,"²⁷ but this is a matter of taste and debating style.

What the hard arguments over damage limitation come to logically is a balancing off of hypothetical quantitative estimates of death and damage avoided against equally hypothetical estimates of increased willingness to dare war because damage can be limited. But such estimates are of course impossible; the point, even for the highly numerical Extenders, is not the provision of a Cartesian proof of the need for damage limitation; it is the value judgment—the moral imperative of trying—together with the analytical belief that it can be done, without increasing the likelihood of nuclear war at all.

²⁴Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists," p. 16.

²⁵Fred S. Hoffman, "The 'Star Wars' Debate: The Western Alliance and Strategic Defense, Part I," in *New Technology and Western Security Policy, Part II*, Adelphi Paper No. 199, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1985, p. 26.

²⁶Caspar Weinberger, "The Rationale for Strategic Defense."

²⁷Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and Strategic Planning*, p. 61.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Extender viewpoint leads to myriad policy recommendations in many directions, concerning the details of weapons procurement and posture, for example. This section examines three groups of recommendations that are central to the Extender strategy and distinguish the Extenders from the Limiters.

- *Nuclear Strategy and Planning.* Plan and be prepared for the use of nuclear weapons in many situations for several purposes going beyond deterrence of attack upon ourselves, particularly to deter Soviet aggression in Europe.
- *Arms Control.* Be serious about explicit arms control agreements if, and only if, they enhance our overall deterrent and political strategies.
- *The Strategic Defense Initiative.* Use SDI as a potentially important component of a discriminating counterforce strategy, important enough to bend or break out of the existing ABM treaty. SDI provides one example—a major and current one—of the weapon implications of the Extender strategy and some of the arms control implications as well.

Although in common with the other schools the Extenders put the highest priority on avoiding nuclear war, the central recommendations that differentiate them from the others concentrate on being prepared to use nuclear weapons for purposes other than deterrence of attack on ourselves. Their analyses say we can, their values say it is desirable; to this end, their recommendations endorse the kind of detailed nuclear strategy and weaponry laid out by Wohlstetter and others.

Gray puts it generally and succinctly: “[T]here is everything to be said in favor of planning for controlled and limited employment of nuclear weapons in support of foreign policy objectives.”²⁸ The most important of these objectives and the one for which the potential use of nuclear force is most integral is, of course, the defense of Western Europe. In Defense Secretary Weinberger’s 1985 *Annual Report to the Congress*, he links NATO defense to U.S. forces from the conventional level to the highest nuclear level:

To enhance deterrence in NATO, we have for many years stationed nuclear forces in Europe. . . . [Our] nonstrategic nuclear forces, along with conventional forces provided by the United States and other NATO nations, constitute the front line of defense against any Warsaw Pact aggression. All of our nuclear forces are governed by a

²⁸Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and Strategic Planning*, p. xix.

single coherent policy that governs the linkage among our conventional, nonstrategic nuclear, and strategic nuclear forces.²⁹

Shortly before becoming Norwegian Defense Minister, Johan Holst made the same point descriptively, but quickly moved from it to a crucial question:

NATO doctrine is predicated on the assumption that deterrence is enhanced by keeping an adversary guessing and uncertain about the response to aggression. The Alliance will tailor the response to the challenge; it will use nuclear weapons if necessary. The principle of deliberate escalation embodies a threat of first use. It is frequently asserted also that the threat of first use is a way of compensating for inferiority in conventional forces, although it has never been suggested that, in a situation of bilateral nuclear employment, the party with inferior conventional forces would be able to win.³⁰

Holst went on to suggest that this presents a major dilemma to NATO, "the party with inferior conventional forces." The Extenders devote their principal nuclear recommendations to the creation of capabilities that they believe *would* enable the NATO "party" to win at the nuclear level if necessary. In addition, however, the issue of the American nuclear umbrella over Europe is not only one of future war, it is also very much one of current politics, as Kissinger points out in regard to the Reykjavik meeting:

The very offer to remove intermediate range American missiles from Europe will have a significant domestic impact on both Britain and West Germany. For years these governments have fought courageously against often violent domestic opposition to the American missile deployment. Before the deployment is even completed, they now find the United States declaring it dispensable. The upshot must be a weakening of friends of the United States and a strengthening of the neutralist trend in Europe. . . . I find it incomprehensible how an alliance dependent on nuclear weapons could agree to the principle of their abolition without at the same time agreeing to a massive increase in conventional forces to meet the massive Soviet conventional threat.³¹

That NATO Europe must remain tied to the United States under the American nuclear umbrella is a proposition agreed to by many of the Limiters, although they would not agree that the detailed plans and

²⁹Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1986*, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., February 4, 1985, p. 47.

³⁰Johan Jorgen Holst, "Denial and Punishment: Straddling the Horns of NATO's Dilemma," in *Power and Policy: Doctrine, the Alliance and Arms Control, Part II*, Adelphi Papers 206, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, Spring 1986, p. 65.

³¹Henry A. Kissinger, "Reagan Was Right to Shun Accords that Were Traps," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 1986, Part V, p. 6.

weaponry of the Extenders are necessary or desirable for this purpose.³² What other geography beyond Europe should be covered is a more open question. Huntington extends the concept of deterrence, although not necessarily nuclear deterrence, well beyond NATO:

Initially . . . the United States was primarily concerned with deterring a Soviet attack on Western Europe. In the 1950s, largely as a consequence of the Korean War, Japan and Korea were brought within the deterrence perimeter. . . . [The 1970s] saw the emergence of three major new deterrent needs. First, the increasing dependence of the United States, as well as its allies, on Persian Gulf oil plus the enhanced capabilities of the Soviet Union to threaten that oil militarily inevitably directed American attention to the security of the Gulf region. . . . Second . . . [as] relations between China and the United States gradually improved in the 1970s, the extent of the American interest in deterring or defeating a Soviet attack on China correspondingly increased. . . . Third . . . [was] Poland in 1980-81. Top officials of both the Carter and Reagan administrations repeatedly warned of the serious consequences that would follow if the Soviets interfered in "the Soviet sphere of influence."³³

For Poland at least, it seems likely that the sanctions behind deterrence were more economic than military, let alone nuclear. Nonetheless, any confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union runs some risk of involving military action, and any military confrontation between the two superpowers involves nuclear risks, which, it is generally agreed, is why the two have avoided such military confrontations since the end of World War II. Where the outer limit lies for U.S. interests so vital as to invoke the nuclear threat directly has not been defined either officially or by any unofficial Extender consensus, but it is for this variety of possibilities that the Extenders want to design our nuclear capabilities.

If the major positive recommendations of the Extenders involve nuclear war-fighting capabilities, their chief cautionary recommendations have to do with explicit arms control agreements with the Soviets. For most of the Extenders, however, "cautionary" is the right term, not "negative." Paul Nitze has expressed the Reagan administration view. (His references to "arms control" here mean specific agreements with the Soviet Union; the debaters, including the Extenders, sometimes use the term to cover unilateral restraints as well.)

³²Nor, to be clear, do the Extenders want to depend solely or even mainly on nuclear weapons in Europe. Like the Limiters, they favor stronger conventional defenses for NATO and a policy of no *early* use of nuclear weapons.

³³Huntington, pp. 6-9.

The primary security objective of the United States and, I believe, of the Western alliance in general is to reduce the risk of war while maintaining our right to live in freedom. Consistent with this objective, we have long based our security policy on deterrence. . . . In this context, arms control should be viewed as one element of our security policy. . . . Arms control is not a substitute or replacement for adequate defenses. Indeed, experience indicates that while arms control hopefully can play an important role in enhancing our security and bringing about a more stable strategic relationship, what we are able and willing to do for ourselves is more important.³⁴

Wohlstetter agrees: "A serious effort to negotiate agreements with the Soviets might enable us to achieve our objectives at lower levels of armaments than might otherwise be possible. . . . Being serious about arms agreements, however, is not the same as being desperate."³⁵ And together with Brian Chow, he has proposed a detailed arms control agreement on antisatellite weapons that they believe would enhance the carefully stabilized deterrence they favor. They contrast this approach with a more emotional one:

The pious insincerities of Capitol Hill suggest the issue is to avoid militarizing the untouched heavens. But the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. will use and have used space for 25 years to further their rival political and military ends. . . . [The real aim should be] to encourage an agreement with the Soviets that would protect the many satellites that supply reconnaissance, warning, communications, navigation and guidance, and other critical information for the defense of the two superpowers and their allies.

Can an agreement do that? Some agreement with the Soviet Union conceivably could help the U.S. protect the functioning of key military satellites. But it would take a fresh approach. The standard sort of ASAT ban that is supposed to be a way of defending satellites would very likely end by preventing the U.S. from protecting them. Then many (not all) proponents of the treaty would ignore its disastrous failure to accomplish its purpose of helping satellites survive. Instead, they would celebrate the survival of the treaty.³⁶

Pipes, however, having left the government, has moved outside of the official consensus, which remains open to at least some forms of arms control as a part of the overall strategy for stable deterrence:

³⁴Nitze, "The Objectives of Arms Control," pp. 1-2.

³⁵Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists," p. 34.

³⁶Albert Wohlstetter and Brian Chow, "Arms Control that Could Work," *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 1985.

Even a good deal would be a mistake, for the root of the problem is not nuclear weapons. . . .

It is undeniable that the Soviet Union faces a crisis and that if its economy is not reformed it risks forfeiting the status of a great political and military power. But it is equally true that the Soviet elite wishes to carry out these reforms in the manner that least upsets the existing Stalinist system and the advantages it gives them. . . .

Arms control thus helps Moscow preserve the Stalinist system intact and continue its expansion while giving the appearance of good will.³⁷

Kissinger, however, in spite of substantial doubts about the way we go about negotiating arms control agreements, dismisses as impractical and undesirable the abandonment of arms control efforts. In a series of 1986 newspaper commentaries, he has painted a picture of arms control as he sees it and would like to see it in the political worlds of Washington, Brussels, Reykjavik, and Geneva:

The "defense unilateralists" have refused to face the fact that arms control is now an essential element of both domestic and allied politics, that their choice may be between a negotiated agreement and a legislated unilateral one. . . . The unresolved U.S. debate tempts the Soviets to choose among a flood of schemes from contending elements of the U.S. bureaucracy. America is perilously close to negotiating with itself.³⁸

There is considerable risk that over the next decade some conflict or other will slide out of control in a strategic environment made increasingly intractable by arms control diplomacy. . . . Moreover the present negotiating method leaves too big a gap between the numbers crunchers at Geneva and the secretary of state or the President. . . . There can be no real progress by endlessly modifying numbers. It is necessary to begin with a vision of a more secure world and develop negotiating positions and strategies in relation to it.³⁹

Once the "vision" has led to "positions and strategies," then the details begin to fall into place, and there are no absolutes among such details. Although some Extenders will accept only fully verifiable agreements, for example, and the Reagan administration puts great weight on alleged Soviet violations of SALT, Kissinger places verification and compliance within the overall political/strategic context:

³⁷Richard Pipes, "Why Hurry Into a Weapons Accord?" *New York Times*, October 10, 1986.

³⁸Kissinger, "Defining Defense by U.S. Purpose," *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1986, Part V, p. 1.

³⁹Kissinger, "Reagan Was Right to Shun Accords That Were Traps."

Verification is another slogan in search of a program. It is not a substitute for meaningful agreements. It depends on three factors: the intrinsic importance of an agreement; the margin within which it is estimated violations are possible; the strategic importance of the violations and the degree to which countermeasures have been prepared.⁴⁰

This contrasts with the Reagan administration's "breaking out" of the SALT II offensive delivery system limitations in November 1986 because of the accusation that the Soviets had violated other portions of the agreement.

In any case, with a few exceptions the Extenders agree that although arms control agreements are not centrally important to nuclear strategy or world stability, the proper sorts of agreements, negotiated in the proper way—with our eyes open—can provide a useful adjunct to unilateral plans and postures.

The Strategic Defense Initiative provides what has become the central operational example of the Extenders' view of the interrelationships among strategy, weapons choices and, to some extent, arms control agreements. Iklé brings these elements together, seeing a role for new arms agreements in spite of his Faustian view of the last ones:

We need to accomplish a long-term transformation of our nuclear strategy, the armaments serving it, and our arms control policy. . . .

The key now for the needed transformation is technological development to make effective defensive systems possible for the United States and our allies. . . . As strategic defenses make it increasingly unlikely that Soviet offensive forces can accomplish their mission, the incentive for new Soviet investment in them is reduced. We thus enhance Soviet willingness to join us in deep reductions of offensive forces.

To this end we ought to take two complementary approaches. We should energetically seek Soviet cooperation, since it would greatly ease and speed the transformation. But we must also be prepared to persist on the harder road, where the Soviet Union would try as long as possible to overcome our defenses and would resist meaningful reductions in offensive forces. The better prepared we are and the more capable of prevailing on the hard road, the more likely it is that the Soviet Union will join us on the easy road.⁴¹

The issue of anti-ballistic-missile defense provides a good microcosm of the debate between the Extenders and the Limiters, and has for 20 years; however, the SDI version comes with a major twist that must be

⁴⁰Kissinger, "Reagan Was Right to Shun Accords That Were Traps."

⁴¹Iklé, "Nuclear Strategy: Can There Be a Happy Ending?" pp. 824-825.

straightened out before specific views can be fitted into overall strategic concepts. The twist is the vision with which President Reagan launched SDI, the vision of a near-perfect "hard-shell" system that would defend our entire population and our allies against almost all incoming ballistic missiles—thus a substitute of defense for deterrence. Virtually none of the Extenders, who back SDI (and none of the Limiters), believe in the feasibility of the presidential system. They handle it by largely ignoring it and then going on to debate their own more modest versions, which fit within known strategic concepts as well as technological ones.⁴²

What is left is ABM defense of missile and other military sites as a part of the Extenders' overall discriminating counterforce strategy. Even so, some division remains among the Extenders, depending largely on the stress they put upon the contribution of our unilateral military posture to deterrent stability, compared with the possible integration of arms agreements into a stable deterrent system. Hoffman stresses the military. Describing the views of the group in which he counts himself, he writes that it

sees possible territorial defenses of the U.S. and of potential theaters of operation such as Europe as a means of increasing the stability of deterrence by denying the achievement of Soviet attack objectives. This group believes that Soviet peacetime nuclear strategy emphasizes the erosion of Western resolve to resist Soviet aggression and Soviet plans for the use of nuclear weapons aim at the destruction of Western military power to resist Soviet attack rather than the destruction of U.S. cities. They believe defenses effective enough to frustrate a Soviet attack on critical Western military target sets could help to counter this strategy long before reaching the higher level of effectiveness sufficient to preclude catastrophic damage in a massive Soviet attack intended to destroy cities. Such transitional defenses would, however, protect population against collateral damage in *likely* kinds of Soviet attack.⁴³

The word "transitional" in the last sentence is a slight bow toward the Presidential objective of full population protection, but Hoffman's stress on the near-term military defense is clear. He explicitly favors "an evolutionary approach to SDI seeking early opportunities to achieve useful levels of defense effectiveness rather than a program that delays any employment until an essentially impenetrable defense becomes feasible."⁴⁴

⁴²See Levine, "The SDI Debate as a Continuation of History," particularly pp. 1-6.

⁴³Fred S. Hoffman, letter to the author, dated June 27, 1985.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Kissinger would not necessarily disagree with this. His political experience leads him to a fuller understanding of the President's dream (or at least a more explicit endorsement of it), but he too strays from the President, not in military terms but in the diplomatic ones of wanting to negotiate about SDI, in contrast to Mr. Reagan's refusal to use it as a "bargaining chip." To Kissinger, SDI is the key to:

a policy on defense and arms control that reflects the revolutionary changes in weapons technology, reduces the reliance on nuclear weapons and responds to the global yearning to banish nuclear apocalypse. . . . The administration has an opportunity to bring about a historic change in strategic relationships and vastly reduce the threat of a nuclear apocalypse. To safeguard the opportunity the administration must do more than simply reject Gorbachev's proposals, it needs an alternative. It must state explicitly that it will not accept a ban on missile defenses but that it will negotiate the scope and nature of strategic defense simultaneously and in relation to agreed levels of offensive forces.⁴⁵

The difference between Hoffman and Kissinger is not primarily one of viewpoint. It is the difference in frame of reference and style between the Extender/strategists such as Hoffman and Wohlstetter, and the Extender/diplomats such as Kissinger and Richard Burt. In spite of engendering occasional heated exchanges, however, the two styles are largely complementary. The beliefs that unite the Extenders and make it appropriate to call them a "school of thought" are that:

- The adversary is tough and sophisticated.
- Careless deterrence will fail to deter him and could lead to war through miscalculation.
- A detailed counterforce strategy is technically feasible, strategically desirable, moral, and more conducive to stable deterrence than a strategy that depends on city-busting.
- If a nuclear exchange does take place, such a strategy is more likely than the alternative to limit escalation and damage.
- Arms control agreements are useful precisely insofar as they fit such a strategy, militarily and diplomatically.

⁴⁵Henry A. Kissinger, "Talking Down Arms," *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 1985, Part V, p. 1.

IV. THE LIMITERS

Is it realistic to expect that a nuclear war could be limited to the detonation of tens or even hundreds of nuclear weapons even though each side would have tens of thousands of weapons available for use? The answer is clearly no. . . . Under such circumstances it is highly likely that rather than surrender, each side would launch a larger attack, hoping that this step would bring the action to a halt by causing the opponent to capitulate. . . .

Thus, "mutual assured destruction" is not, as some have alleged, an immoral policy. Mutual assured destruction—the vulnerability of each superpower to the awesome destructive power of nuclear weapons—is not a policy at all. It is a grim fact of life. . . .

A strengthened ABM Treaty would allow the Geneva negotiations to address the primary objective of offensive arms control: increasing the stability of deterrence by eliminating the perceptions of both sides that the other has, or is seeking, a first-strike capability. . . . Both sides have such immense forces that they should concentrate on quickly reducing the most threatening components—those that stand in the way of stability and much lower force levels.

—Robert S. McNamara¹

Although the Limiters favor counterforce targeting to limit damage, as well as specific weapons and plans that are central to the Extenders' strategy, they do not believe that such details are likely to make much difference. The basic analytical root of their disagreement is the belief that once a nuclear exchange is initiated it is likely to escalate rapidly out of anyone's control, no matter what plans have been best-laid. "MAD" is therefore an unalterable condition, not a policy; the fear of where a nuclear exchange might end deters its start. No plans are going to change that, and it is perilous to operate militarily and politically on the basis of precise discrimination and control. Moreover, the threat of a first strike in times of crisis, implied by a thoroughgoing counterforce posture as well as the immense size of the nuclear forces of the opposing superpowers, is destabilizing and dangerous. Arms control agreements are vital to reduce such threats; in addition, some

¹Robert S. McNamara, *Blundering into Disaster*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1986, pp. 34–130.

Limiters favor a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons as a measure of unilateral arms control.

ANALYSES

The two basic analytical propositions of the Limiters mirror those of the Extenders:

- Deterrence is based on the existence of nuclear weapons and the uncertainty of what would really happen if they were used, not on any specific plans for their use, which is fortunate because such plans would be unlikely to work if implementation were ever attempted.
- Although the Soviet Union is still capable of great mischief, it is far too prudent to attempt such mischief in ways that would threaten our vital interests. The Soviets neither possess nor aspire to "strategic superiority" over the United States, and they are as anxious as we are to reduce the momentum of the nuclear arms race.

The key to the Limiters' theory of nuclear dynamics is McGeorge Bundy's phrase "existential deterrence." Nuclear weapons exist and cannot be made to cease to exist. Nobody knows what would happen were a nuclear exchange to be initiated, but everybody fears the worst that could happen, "the end of civilization as we know it—if not of mankind itself," in Drell's description of our stake in the Faustian bargain. The existence of nuclear weapons plus this fear keep both sides far from nuclear initiation. As summarized by Bundy:

The terrible and avoidable uncertainties in any recourse to nuclear war create what could be called "existential" deterrence, where the function of the adjective is to distinguish this phenomenon from anything based on strategic theories or declared policies or even international commitments. . . .

Now that both strategic arsenals are redundantly destructive and amply survivable, we can say with still more confidence that existential deterrence is strong, and that its strength is essentially independent of most changes in deployment. Because no one can predict how these arsenals might be used, because these uncertainties create an enormously powerful existential deterrent, and because this reality is essentially unaffected by any changes except those that might truly challenge the overall survivability of the forces on one side or the other, it makes no sense to base procurement decisions on refined

calculations of specific kinds of force that would be needed for a wide variety of limited nuclear responses.²

Not all Limiters would agree with Bundy's contention that "existential deterrence is strong"; Drell is too conscious of the potential inferno to be optimistic even in this sense, for example. But common to all the Limiters is the concept that the deterrence we do have and that is all we have is existential.

Existential deterrence is the Limiters' answer to the Extenders' accusation that they espouse the morally "MAD" strategy of wanting to target innocents. McNamara's description of mutual assured deterrence as "a grim fact of life" takes the issue head-on, and it is difficult, at least in recent literature, to find a suggestion from any Limiter that threats to population are necessary for deterrence. French analyst Pierre Hassner is an Extender. Nonetheless, he suggests that it is

[not] entirely fair to accuse the MAD bombers of actually wanting to bomb innocents or even of claiming that they can deter only by threatening cities. Actually, I think that what they are saying is that threatening cities is the only way to deter without provoking, i.e., without raising the suspicion that you are preparing a first strike and hence increasing the danger of preemptive or launch-on-warning from the other side.³

In fact, the Limiters' own writings do not contend that "threatening cities is the only way" to do anything; their central point is the existential one that threats to cities and populations are implicit in the uncertainties surrounding nuclear warfare, and that suffices.

Indeed, Halperin says that Secretary McNamara quantified MAD merely as

a management device to justify turning down requests for increases in strategic forces. The doctrine was *not* used to prohibit the development of strategic forces capable of attacking Soviet military targets. The United States already had that capability and would continue to develop and expand it.⁴

But on the face of it, the Extenders' discriminating strategy is not inconsistent with existential deterrence. Why then do the Limiters oppose it? Although they do not oppose counterforce rather than

²McGeorge Bundy, "The Bishops and the Bomb," *New York Review*, June 16, 1983, p. 4.

³Pierre Hassner, Letter to the Editor, "Morality and Deterrence," *Commentary*, December 1983, p. 8.

⁴Morton Halperin, *Nuclear Fallacy: Dispelling the Myth of Nuclear Strategy*, Ballinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, Mass., 1987, p. 20.

countercity targeting, they do disagree with the overall posture because they believe that the discriminating strategy will not work as intended; rather, its pursuit will lead to military and political instability and will preclude the achievement of several Limiter goals, particularly meaningful arms control agreements.

The detailed discriminating counterforce strategy cannot work, according to the Limiters, for four major reasons: It will lead to preemption; it is virtually impossible to control, militarily or politically; it will lead to unintended escalation; and collateral damage will be so great as to render the counterforce discrimination meaningless.

Preemption

According to an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* signed by ten leading Limiters, including Bundy, Halperin, and McNamara:

Decision-makers would be under great pressure during a crisis. There would be a strong incentive to fire off nuclear weapons before they could be destroyed on their launchers.⁵

Failure of Control

The *Atlantic* article goes on to say:

Command, control, and communications would deteriorate once a nuclear war had begun, leaving decision-makers with incomplete information on rapidly changing battlefield conditions. These factors make it likely that authority to use nuclear weapons would have to be delegated to field commanders soon after the onset of a nuclear conflict, or perhaps even before it began. Such a policy offers little room for error and leaves little time for rational response. . . . As a 1983 report by the North Atlantic Assembly stated: "Few experts believe that the NATO political consultation process could possibly function effectively in time of crisis."⁶

Escalation

Halperin expresses the Limiters' doubts about the possibility of stopping the nuclear spiral, once it has begun:

⁵McGeorge Bundy, Morton H. Halperin, William W. Kaufmann, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, Madalene O'Donnell, Leon V. Sigal, Gerard C. Smith, Richard H. Ullman, and Paul C. Warnke, "Back from the Brink," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1986, p. 36.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

Once a single nuclear weapon was used the pressure to respond and to use additional weapons before they could be destroyed would be great indeed. Military commanders are likely to feel that the prohibition on using nuclear explosive devices was removed once a single nuclear warhead had been exploded; political leaders would come under enormous pressure to authorize military commanders to use the nuclear explosive devices at their disposal according to military judgments. In hours, if not minutes, much of Europe would be destroyed and nuclear explosive devices would have exploded on Soviet territory. It is difficult to see how the exchange could be ended short of both sides firing all of their warheads including those that the United States labeled "strategic."⁷

Collateral Damage

Desmond Ball summarizes many estimates of civilian casualties in many counterforce exchanges. The numbers range from zero (for U.S. attacks on Soviet targets chosen for their isolation from populated areas) to 50 million (for a major Soviet counterforce strike against the United States). The modal estimate seems to be from 20–30 million each for the United States and the Soviet Union,⁸ but Ball has three major doubts about the validity or utility of such numbers, even for the low end of his range of counterforce attacks:

First, the figures can only be considered "limited" by comparison with those that might result from direct nuclear attacks on urban-industrial areas. In the U.S. case, the damage caused even by a counterforce exchange would be unprecedented. . . . In the case of a U.S. counterforce attack against the Soviet Union, the fatalities could well approximate those of the Second World War. . . .

Second, the figures are almost certainly underestimates of the actual casualties that would be produced in the situations postulated. . . . For example, the estimates described above do not include casualties caused by fires ignited by nuclear blasts . . . [and] the effects of nuclear war are generally calculated by summing the consequences of particular effects, and there is no methodology for assessing the synergistic effects, even though these would be substantial. . . .

⁷Halperin, p. 106.

⁸Desmond Ball, *Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?* Adelphi Paper No. 169, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1981, pp. 27–28.

The third point... concerns the overall magnitude of the uncertainty that surrounds all estimates of the effects of nuclear war. This uncertainty is inevitable.⁹

These reasons doom the detailed counterforce strategy to failure. But the strategy is also unnecessary. Historically, Bundy points out, "In all of our most serious confrontations, and in our avoidance of such confrontations—in Berlin as in Cuba, in 1985 as in 1960—it has been nuclear *danger* and not nuclear *superiority* that has been decisive."¹⁰ This does not mean that we can ignore all details of nuclear posture and strategy; Bundy goes on to say:

It is a grave mistake to underrate the importance of both quality and quantity in the maintenance of deterrence, and particular attention must always be given to making sure that the strategic deterrent as a whole is amply survivable. There is also good reason for maintaining both plans and capabilities for appropriate replies to all kinds of nuclear attack—large or "small," general or local. My argument should not be confused with any assertion that a couple of hundred city busters are enough, or with any suggestion that we should not constantly attend to any new weakness or vulnerability that appears. . . . I have never heard a remotely persuasive argument that the world would be a better place if the Soviet government *did* possess a usable nuclear advantage.¹¹

That the Soviets do not possess such an advantage is one conclusion of the other key Limiter analysis. More generally, the Limiters believe that the United States bases its attitudes and strategies toward the Soviet Union on vast misunderstandings of their intentions as well as their capabilities. According to British historian Michael Howard:

My own firmly-held belief, however, is that the leadership of the Soviet Union, and any successors they may have within the immediately foreseeable future, are cautious and rather fearful men . . . above all conscious of the inadequacy of the simplistic doctrines of Marxism-Leninism on which they were nurtured to explain a world far more complex and diverse than either Marx or Lenin ever conceived. Their *Staatspolitik*, that complex web of interests, perceptions and ideals which Clausewitz believed should determine the use of military power, thus gives them no clearer guidance as to how to use their armed forces than ours gives to us.¹²

⁹Ibid., pp. 28–29.

¹⁰McGeorge Bundy, "Nuclear Weapons Policy: Where Are We Now?" speech at the University of Maryland Law School, January 10, 1986, p. 10.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 12–16.

¹²Michael Howard, "On Fighting a Nuclear War," *International Security*, Spring 1981, pp. 6–8.

Indeed, if anything, Soviet actions and attitudes are based on fear of us. According to John Steinbruner:

In recent years, Soviet leaders have repeatedly expressed fears that U.S. strategic programs are designed to provide the capacity to initiate attack on Soviet strategic forces in the event of war, with sufficient success to establish some meaningful form of military victory.¹³

In the afterglow of Reykjavik, McNamara absolves the administration of Steinbruner's deliberate creation of a "capacity to initiate attack on Soviet strategic forces," but puts the Soviet fears into even sharper focus as lit by SDI:

What they fear is that we will deploy SDI say five or six years from now when we are even farther ahead. They would face a period of years before they caught up to us. During that period they would fear that we had a first-strike capability. They have every reason to be afraid of that. However, I am certain that is not the President's objective.¹⁴

Further, Soviet strategic fears are set on a base of general deterioration of their system. Zbigniew Brzezinski puts it similarly to his Harvard colleague and fellow National Security Council alumnus Richard Pipes, but with a very different policy twist from Pipes's "don't help them 'preserve the Stalinist system'" quoted above:

I think the Soviet Union realizes that what they were predicting in the 1970s, namely the general crisis of capitalism, is not coming to pass, and that we are witnessing instead the general crisis of communism. . . . My own view, in the light of the foregoing, is that we can be quite sanguine about the next phase in the American-Soviet negotiations. . . . Eventually, I feel quite confident we will end up with greatly reduced offensive strategic forces and with both possessing some minimum strategic defenses, each thereby gaining additional security against each other, and also against third-party threats.¹⁵

The Limiters suggest further that the details of Soviet strategic nuclear doctrine on which Extender Sovietologists and strategists put substantial weight, are being misread and misinterpreted. Marshall

¹³John Steinbruner, "U.S. and Soviet Security Perspectives," in Len Ackland and Steven McGuire (eds.), *Assessing the Nuclear Age*, Educational Foundation for Nuclear Science, Chicago, 1986, p. 158.

¹⁴Interview with Robert S. McNamara, *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1986, Part II, p. 5.

¹⁵Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 1986, Part II, p. 5.

Shulman, who was principal advisor on Soviet affairs to the Secretary of State during the Carter administration, contends that:

The belief that Soviet doctrinal writings imply an acceptance of limited nuclear war as an advantage to the Soviet Union stems from a confused and superficial reading of that literature. In practice, Soviet military preparations have assumed that a credible deterrent must be underpinned by a capability to deal with various levels of possible conflict. . . . A careful reading of Soviet military and political writing gives no support for the belief that Soviet leaders accept the possibility that a limited nuclear exchange could reasonably be expected to remain limited.¹⁶

How, in the light of these beliefs about Soviet fears and military conservatism, to understand Soviet weapons procurement and strategic doctrine? David Holloway interprets the Soviet procurements that are highlighted by the Extenders as giant steps to surpass us as being, instead, catchup efforts to achieve parity:

[T]he Soviets refused to acquiesce in strategic inferiority and built up their offensive forces, attaining rough parity with the United States by the early 1970s. . . . Brezhnev and his colleagues were not willing to resign themselves to second place in the symbolism of greatness. They may have hoped in the mid-1960s, as they were to do in the 1970s, that strategic parity would bring the Soviet Union economic and political benefits in its relationship with the West. . . . Soviet policy has been deeply rooted in the urge to compete with the United States and guided by the belief that any inferiority would have harmful military and political consequences.¹⁷

These views of the Soviet Union lead to another crucial difference between the Limiters and the Extenders, their interpretation of the causes and significance of the "arms race." The Extenders do not discuss it very fully because they do not take it very seriously. Their "We build, they build; we stop, they build" viewpoint argues that we can stop only our side of the race because Soviet actions are autonomous from ours anyhow. To the Limiters, however, this is a fundamental error, and the arms race is a crucial issue. McNamara picks up on the interpretations of the Soviets provided by such Sovietologists as Shulman and Holloway, together with his own experience as Secretary of Defense, to present a picture of the arms race in which each side conditions its actions on the other's:

¹⁶Marshall D. Shulman, "U.S.-Soviet Relations and the Control of Nuclear Weapons," in Barry M. Blechman (ed.), *Rethinking the U.S. Strategic Posture*, Ballinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, Mass., 1982, p. 88.

¹⁷David Holloway, "Lessons of the Arms Race," in Ackland and McGuire, pp. 138-141.

Many Americans are under the impression that while the United States expands its nuclear forces at some times and shows restraint at others, the Soviet Union pursues a relentless, inexorable buildup. . . . From this it is argued that the United States must continue to expand merely to catch up.

The reality of the matter is much more complex than such misperceptions suggest. Soviet decisions about the forces that they will build are not simply the result of an internally motivated drive for power and superiority. Many of their force increases over the past twenty years can best be understood as reactions to American developments. In reverse, the same applies to many American developments. I have referred to this as the "action-reaction phenomenon." It is a fundamental force driving the nuclear arms race.¹⁸

A question less frequently discussed by the Limiters, however, is: What's wrong with an arms race, anyhow? For the most part, the race is treated as being bad by the simple assumptions that more weapons are worse than fewer and increases in numbers worse than decreases. Some Limiters treat these assumptions essentially as first-order value judgments rather than basing them on any analyses contending that large and increasing numbers of weapons lead to war. McNamara does link the current arms race more specifically to increased likelihood of nuclear war, with his concern that

now we appear on the verge of an escalation of the arms race that will not only place weapons in space, but will seriously increase the risk that one or the other of the adversaries will be tempted in a period of tension to initiate a preemptive nuclear strike before the opponent can get in the first blow."¹⁹

The most detailed and balanced recent discussion by a Limiter, however, is by Joseph Nye of Harvard, also a Carter administration alumnus:

In a world with 50,000 nuclear weapons, many people believe cutting their numbers seems self-evidently good. Yet, many strategists are skeptical. Although they share the public's concern about avoiding nuclear war, they doubt that the number of weapons determines the probability of use—fewer, they argue, is not necessarily better. Moreover, some of the most popular reasons for cutting are not compelling.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, unless one assumes major political changes, nuclear reductions may not save much money. . . . There is

¹⁸McNamara, *Blundering into Disaster*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 6.

also the belief that reducing the number of nuclear weapons reduces the odds of accidental use. However, the sheer number of weapons is not the major factor governing the odds of nuclear war. . . .

The more compelling arguments for reducing nuclear weapons tend to be political. Reductions may help maintain or restore public confidence in nuclear deterrence both at home and among U.S. allies. . . . Reductions could also reassure the American public about Soviet intentions, and reassure the Soviets about U.S. policies. . . .

The largest gains are likely to come in the political area, both in terms of reversing the sense of momentum that worries the public and in improving U.S.-Soviet relations.²⁰

In addition to the arms race, many Limiters put an exchange starting with a nuclear accident or other "unintended wars" at the center of their worries. As Professors Michael Intriligator and Dagobert Brito, following a path similar to Nye's, contend, "The most dangerous aspect of the current arms situation is not the presence or the level of weapons, which, in fact, create the stability of mutual deterrence, but rather the danger of accident and especially the possibility that either or both of the superpowers has a launch on warning system."²¹ The *Atlantic Monthly* article by the ten Limiters puts the matter into a more political context and suggests that undue confidence in "the stability of mutual deterrence" may, in fact, lead to war by accident:

[E]ven if the specter of "nuclear accidents waiting to happen" instills a greater measure of caution in Soviet leaders, it cannot guarantee that the East and the West will never stumble into war. . . . There are many examples throughout history of wars beginning not through a rational calculation of mutual benefit and cost but through a miscalculation at the height of a political crisis.²²

Stable "existential" deterrence is still central, because it is all we have, but even it is not dependable.

VALUE JUDGMENTS

Nuclear war by miscalculation, probably on the part of those who thought they could control it but couldn't, is at the analytical core of the Limiters' fears; avoiding nuclear war is at their value core. It is not the only value; if it were, unilateral disarmament would be an easy

²⁰Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Farewell to Arms Control?" *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1986, pp. 6-13.

²¹Michael D. Intriligator and Dagobert L. Brito, *Non-Armageddon Solutions to the Arms Race*, CISA Reprint No. 1, Center for International and Strategic Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984, p. 5.

²²Bundy, Halperin, et al., p. 38.

way out. But, in contrast to the Extenders, avoidance, not damage limitation and not prudent political use, is central.

The Extenders' two differentiating value propositions concerned the importance of damage-limiting control and the worth of defending against Communism. For the Limiters, there is one central value judgment that drives their thinking about nuclear strategy:

- Nuclear war must be avoided;

but the single proposition is conditioned by another value judgment that is simply assumed, not stressed:

- Of course we must assume some risks to defend our own freedom and help defend the freedom of our close allies.

It is conditioned also by the analytical belief that neither avoiding war nor defending freedom is very easy. Damage limitation is not among the important values of the Limiters, not because they don't like it, but because analytically they believe it is not possible.

Thus far, this discussion of the Limiters has set forth their views and contrasted them to the Extenders. In taking up their value judgments, however, attention must be paid to the other boundary, that between the Limiters and the Disarmers. Whereas the Disarmers are unwilling to contemplate the actual use of nuclear weapons in *any* circumstances, the Limiters reject this absolute criterion. The Limiters thus must consider tradeoffs between their two primary value judgments—opposition to Red as well as dead—and the relationship of deterrent threats to their potential implementation.

Father Hehir, the drafter of the Catholic Bishops' statement, is classed as a Disarmer under the definitions used here because of his contention that nuclear deterrence of nuclear attack may be moral but use of nuclear weapons even to execute the deterrent threat cannot be.²³ The Bishops themselves, however, fall within the Limiter consensus because they suggest not only that deterrence can be acceptable under some conditions, but that "proportional" use of nuclear weapons may also be permissible. As summarized in their statement:

Catholic teaching begins in every case with a presumption against war and for peaceful settlement of disputes. In exceptional cases, determined by the moral principles of the just-war tradition, some uses of force are permitted.

Every nation has a right and duty to defend itself against unjust aggression.

²³At least that is the Wohlstetter interpretation of Hehir's view.

Offensive war of any kind is not morally justifiable.

It is never permitted to direct nuclear or conventional weapons to "the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their populations." The intentional killing of innocent civilians or non-combatants is always wrong.

Even defensive response to unjust attack can cause destruction which violates the principle of proportionality. . . . No defensive strategy, nuclear or conventional, which exceeds the limits of proportionality is morally permissible.

"In current conditions 'deterrence' based on balance, certainly not as a step in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable." (Pope John Paul II)²⁴

The Bishops' sentence in their summary, "The intentional killing of innocent civilians or non-combatants is always wrong," sounds like the words of the anti-MAD Extenders, but lest such a confusion be made, the body of their statement adds:

But "counterforce targeting," while preferable from the perspective of protecting civilians, is often joined with a declaratory policy which conveys the notion that nuclear war is subject to precise rational and moral limits. We have already expressed our severe doubts about such a concept. Furthermore, a purely counterforce strategy may seem to threaten the viability of other nations' retaliatory forces, making deterrence unstable in a crisis and war more likely.²⁵

For most of the Limiters, the acceptance of deterrence as the best available alternative for avoiding nuclear war is less agonizing—reality is reality. Schelling makes it a normal fact of life, and not only nuclear life:

Most of what we call civilization depends on reciprocal vulnerability. . . . It is often said that terror is a poor basis for civilization, and the balance of terror is not a permanently viable foundation for the avoidance of war. Fear can promote hostility and fear can lead to impetuosity in a crisis. I agree, but I do not equate a balance of deterrence with a balance of terror.²⁶

Most of the Limiters remain relatively terrified, however, although they stay away from the language of terror; and those who have been in the decisionmaking position substitute the language of pragmatics for that of outraged morality. McNamara quotes Bundy as saying:

²⁴National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, pp. 4–5.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 49.

²⁶Schelling, "What Went Wrong with Arms Control?" p. 233.

Think-tank analysts can set levels of acceptable damage well up in the tens of millions of lives. They can assume that the loss of dozens of great cities is somehow a real choice for sane men. They are in an unreal world. In the real world of real political leaders—whether here or in the Soviet Union—a decision that would bring even one hydrogen bomb on one city of one's own country would be recognized in advance as a catastrophic blunder; ten bombs on ten cities would be a disaster beyond history; and a hundred bombs on a hundred cities are unthinkable.²⁷

Elsewhere, Bundy comments on the Bishops' report: "They think it will never be morally right to be the first to cross the nuclear threshold, thus joining those of us who have argued, as a matter of political prudence, that it is time to move away from reliance on that suicidal threat."²⁸ "Political prudence" feels more comfortable than morality, but the outcome is the same.

It is also more comfortable for the Limiters to assume than to discuss in detail the existence of other objectives, for which conventional conflict and nuclear risk may be appropriate, but these other objectives remain and remain important. Harvard Professors Joseph Nye, Graham Allison, and Albert Carnesale name their book *Hawks, Doves, and Owls*. They do not class themselves even as owls, but in the terminology used here, they are Limiters, concentrating much more on avoiding nuclear war than on minimizing damage. At the beginning of the book, however, they make clear that war avoidance must be understood in a complex setting of multiple objectives. They ask of U.S. nuclear policy, "What are we trying to do?" and reply:

Our one-line answer is: To protect U.S. values and institutions, which requires avoiding nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States must manage the political competition with the Soviet Union so as to avoid a major nuclear war. American policymakers will pursue other objectives as well, but this is the necessary condition that must be satisfied if we are to have the opportunity to pursue any other goal.²⁹

And Bundy falls back on existential deterrence to reunite the avoidance of nuclear war with other foreign policy objectives: "we can draw a further conclusion which the Russians might not wish us to reach. Where existential deterrence is strong, where there is an

²⁷McNamara, *Blundering into Disaster*, pp. 137-138.

²⁸Bundy, "The Bishops and the Bomb," p. 6.

²⁹Graham T. Allison, Albert Carnesale, and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Introduction" in Graham T. Allison, Albert Carnesale, and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Hawks, Doves, and Owls*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1985, p. 15.

informed fear of nuclear war on both sides, the threat of nuclear blackmail can be contained."³⁰

A more comprehensive Limiter discussion of values in a nuclear context, however, has been presented by Nye, subsequent to his contribution to the *Hawks, Doves, and Owls* volume. He divides nuclear morality into three components—motives, means, and consequences. Although he assigns some weight to each of these, his own stress is on consequences:

Given the enormity of the potential effects, moral reasoning about nuclear weapons must pay primary attention to consequences. In the nuclear era a philosophy of pure integrity that would "let the world perish" is not compelling. But given the unavoidable uncertainties in the estimation of risks, consequentialist arguments will not support precise or absolute moral judgments.³¹

Thus, even the defense of freedom (motives) and even the distaste for the morality of nuclear threats (means) must give way to the examination of the consequences of a specific threat or action, particularly the consequences of risking an actual nuclear exchange as an outcome. And Limiter as well as Extender analysis of deterrence indicates that the nuclear threat may well be the best way to avoid the nuclear outcome. Potential consequences include the political as well as the nuclear, however, and Nye does not shy from these, but attempts to put them in context:

Sometimes political perceptions of a delicate nuclear balance of power are invoked to justify far-fetched or marginal foreign policy goals. But to resort to nuclear threats in order to protect low stakes is a morally and politically nasty bluff. Fortunately, prudence reinforces virtue in helping to limit such threats, since in deterrence a particular move is likely to succeed only if it is sufficiently proportionate to crucial values that it will appear credible.³²

Such proportionality governs Limiter value judgments on matters other than the avoidance of nuclear war. But the weight put on avoidance is such that it must be a crucial value indeed that would invoke any calculated increase in the risks of this war. For some Limiters, the defense of Western Europe is that crucial. Whether the threat and potential actual use of nuclear weapons should be used for that defense is at the heart of the "no-first-use" controversy, over which Limiters divide in their policy recommendations.

³⁰Bundy, "The Bishops and the Bomb," p. 8.

³¹Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Nuclear Ethics*, The Free Press, New York, 1986, p. 91.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 47.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Like the Extenders, the Limiters set forth a wide variety of policy recommendations. Three sets, corresponding to the three discussed above to characterize the central policy thrusts of the Extenders, illustrate the major directions in which the Limiters want to move and the differences between the two schools.

- *Nuclear Strategy and Planning.* Move away from any use of nuclear weapons other than for deterrence of nuclear attack. To implement this, retain a nuclear force that is well enough protected to preclude a successful enemy first strike; and continue counterforce targeting on a strictly second-strike basis. In any case, existential deterrence will continue to deter Soviet aggression in Europe, as it has thus far. Limiter views here range from “no-first-use” (McNamara and others) down to “Maintain the first use threat, but don’t plan for it and do everything to avoid its implementation” (Allison, Carnesale, and Nye).
- *Arms Control.* Strive for explicit arms agreements with the Soviet Union as an essential part of overall deterrent stability and arms control.
- *The Strategic Defense Initiative.* Confine SDI to laboratory research well within the bounds of the existing ABM treaty, retaining the option of using missile defense as part of a more comprehensive offensive and defensive deterrence-stabilizing agreement with the Soviets.

As has been noted, the Limiters’ views on these matters, particularly on nuclear planning and on SDI, differ from those of the Extenders somewhat more in words (declaratory policy) than in actual targeting and other plans. A major practical manifestation of the differences, however, lies in budgetary choices: The Limiters would not only spend less on SDI, they would devote little of the defense budget to nuclear-option-proliferating hardware, compared, for example, with conventional readiness.

The most drastic Limiter recommendation on the use of nuclear weapons—a declaratory policy and a strategy that foreswears their use unless or until someone else has used them against us—was set forth, tentatively, in 1982 by McNamara, Bundy, Kennan, and Gerard Smith:

The one clearly definable firebreak against the worldwide disaster of general nuclear war is the one that stands between all other kinds of conflict and any use whatsoever of nuclear weapons. To keep that firebreak wide and strong is in the deepest interest of all mankind.

In retrospect, indeed, it is remarkable that this country has not responded to this reality more quickly. Given the appalling consequences of even the most limited use of nuclear weapons and the total impossibility for both sides of any guarantee against unlimited escalation, there must be the gravest doubt about the wisdom of a policy which asserts the effectiveness of any first use of nuclear weapons by either side. So it seems timely to consider the possibilities, the requirements, the difficulties, and the advantages of a policy of no-first-use.³³

McNamara's own view was less tentative, and, by his own account, had been for some time. In a 1983 article he wrote, in words repeated in his 1986 book:

I do not believe we can avoid serious and unacceptable risk of nuclear war until we recognize—and until we base all our military plans, defense budgets, weapon deployments, and arms negotiations on the recognition—that *nuclear weapons serve no military purpose whatever. They are totally useless—except only to deter one's opponent from using them.*

This is my view today. It was my view in the early 1960s.

At that time, in long private conversations with successive Presidents—Kennedy and Johnson—I recommended, without qualification, that they never initiate, under any circumstances, the use of nuclear weapons.³⁴

The 1986 *Atlantic Monthly* article, signed by the four authors of the initial no-first-use piece and six others, lays out a path to no-first-use through an intermediate stage, no-early-use of nuclear weapons.

In the short run the United States can and should move toward a diminished reliance on nuclear weapons by reducing and relocating vulnerable nuclear forces currently deployed near the NATO-Warsaw Pact border. We believe that eventually the United States, in concert with its NATO allies, should formalize its commitment not to initiate the use of nuclear weapons and should alter its deployments, war plans, and attitudes accordingly. . . .

³³McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, and Gerard Smith, "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1982, p. 757. The "firebreak" concept, although recognized implicitly by many since the first use of nuclear weapons (e.g., by President Eisenhower but not by those advisors who recommended use of nuclear weapons at Dien Bien Phu), was formalized by Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, App. A. It has been the central criterion for Extenders as well as Limiters in considering the use of nuclear weapons, ever since.

³⁴Robert S. McNamara, "The Military Role of Nuclear Weapons: Perceptions and Misperceptions," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1983, p. 79. Repeated (without the italics) in *Blundering into Disaster*, p. 139.

As an initial measure, the Western alliance could adopt a policy of no early use. . . . Those weapons that raise the most serious problems relating to release authority and early use . . . could all be rapidly withdrawn and their storage facilities secured against conventional and other forms of non-nuclear attack.³⁵

In his own book, however, Halperin, one of the signers of the *Atlantic* piece, goes further in terms of restructured posture: "NATO's conventional military forces would be completely separated from the specialized units designed to deliver nuclear explosive devices should the political leadership of the Alliance ever decide to employ them,"³⁶ but he does not go quite so far in absolute renunciation of first use:

[W]hat I am suggesting is not, strictly speaking, a no-first-use policy for Europe. It is a somewhat different proposal—one that focuses not on a public promise never to use nuclear weapons first, but rather on the forces and operational plans for nuclear and conventional weapons in Europe.³⁷

Allison, Carnesale, and Nye also decline to go as far as absolute no-first-use. High among their policy prescriptions is:

DON'T adopt a no first use policy. Rhetorical removal of the threat of intentional escalation to nuclear war in Europe, the Persian Gulf, or Korea would (if believed) psychologically enhance Soviet advantages in general purpose forces and increase the risk that the Soviets might attempt a conventional attack. . . .

So long as nuclear forces are deployed in substantial numbers, they present an inescapable risk that any conventional war might escalate by design or by action to a nuclear one.³⁸

Their rejection of no-first-use is in agreement with the Extenders, but the last sentence invokes existential deterrence, and their prescriptions differ substantially from the Extenders' detailed options. They surround their conditional acceptance of first use with such Limiter recommendations as:

DON'T seek a first-strike capability.

DON'T plan for a nuclear demonstration shot in Europe.

DO reduce reliance on short-range theater nuclear weapons.

DON'T use nuclear alerts for political signalling.

³⁵Bundy et al., "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," pp. 36–40.

³⁶Halperin, p. 95.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Allison, Carnesale, and Nye, pp. 227–230.

DON'T multiply crises . . . by initiating another crisis in which [we have] the advantage.

DON'T decapitate [by targeting] Soviet political and military leaders and their C³ network.³⁹

Given all this, Allison, Carnesale, and Nye rejoin the recommendations of the ten authors of the *Atlantic Monthly* piece (among whom they are not numbered):

DON'T plan for early use of nuclear weapons.⁴⁰

The stress of the Limiters, on whichever side of the no-first-use issue they come down, is thus on *moving away* from the use of nuclear weapons, rather than on the Extenders' *control* of the use. This does not imply that the Limiters are unwilling to try for controlled counterforce. Rather, they want to make sure that such control is part of a second-strike strategy, not a cover for a concealed first-strike option. Halperin, for example, contends that:

American strategic forces [should] be capable of destroying only a small portion of the Soviet strategic forces quickly in a first strike. . . . It is sometimes suggested that this strategy would necessarily mean that American strategic forces would be targeted solely or primarily on cities. This is not so. The United States could maintain the capability to attack a range of targets including theater forces, industrial capacity, and even missile silos. All that would be eschewed is that ability to attack all or most of the Soviet strategic forces quickly.⁴¹

The Limiters' main instrument both for deemphasis of nuclear weapons and their control, however, is the explicit arms control agreement. Allison, Carnesale, and Nye's recommendations also include:

DO preserve existing arms control agreements.

DO pursue crisis stability through arms control.

DO reduce uncertainties through arms control negotiations.⁴²

Before we examine the Limiters' views on arms agreements, however, it is necessary to present one piece of recent historical context. Just as President Reagan's vision of a "hard-shell" SDI put a new and difficult twist into the Extenders' long-run recommendations for ABM,

³⁹Ibid., pp. 232-236.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 236.

⁴¹Halperin, pp. 76-77.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 242-243.

his performance in the Reykjavik talks with Gorbachev put a new and difficult twist into the Limiters' arms agreement recommendations. At Reykjavik, the President outran his staff preparations and his own previous positions to accept and even propose measures—e.g., zero ballistic missiles and/or zero nuclear weapons after ten years (depending on whose version of Reykjavik one accepts)—that had been around for a while as symbolic goals but were too radical even for many Limiters when put into a context of timetable reality. As put by Kissinger, "At Reykjavik, the Soviets took advantage of the weakness in the American decision-making process by suddenly agreeing to American positions put forward over the years primarily to paper over departmental differences."⁴³ Politically, American Limiters could not reject this sudden "breakthrough"; substantively, many of them joined Kissinger in his doubts.

The Reykjavik problem is characterized by Schelling's (pre-Reykjavik) contention that "hardly anyone who takes arms control seriously believes that zero is the goal," and his decrying of "'arms control' for its own sake, not for the sake of peace and confidence."⁴⁴ "Peace and confidence" is a broad statement of what the Limiters hope to get out of arms agreements. Somewhat more specifically, unlike the Extenders, they believe in Drell's terms that "the first and overriding goals of arms control negotiations should be: To enhance strategic stability based on a balance of highly survivable and secure deterrent forces."⁴⁵ Different writers stress various aspects of this objective:

Brzezinski:

[I]n any future negotiations, the issue would be what mix of offensive and defensive strategic forces would achieve mutual strategic security. That is the matter that ought to be negotiated with the Soviet Union—not largely theological discussions about the respective merits of a total Strategic Defense Initiative or a totally nuclear free world.⁴⁶

Lieutenant General Glenn Kent (USAF, ret.):

The United States must therefore seek agreement with the Soviet Union on the fundamental principle of survival of strategic forces: that both countries seek stability and eschew the capability for a successful first strike.⁴⁷

⁴³Henry A. Kissinger, "The President's Men: Too Weak for the Job," *Los Angeles Times*, December 21, 1986, Section V, p. 6.

⁴⁴Schelling, "What Went Wrong with Arms Control?" pp. 226–228.

⁴⁵Drell, p. 37.

⁴⁶Zbigniew Brzezinski, "To Climb Out of the Foreign Policy Pit," *New York Times*, December 16, 1986, p. 27 (National Edition).

⁴⁷Glenn A. Kent, with Randall J. DeValck and Edward L. Warner III, *A New Approach to Arms Control*, The RAND Corporation, R-3140-FF/RC, June 1984, p. v.

Bundy, Kennan, McNamara, and Smith:

In its underlying meaning the [ABM] Treaty is a safeguard less against defense as such than against unbridled competition.⁴⁸

Walter Slocombe (Deputy Undersecretary of Defense in the Carter administration):

Historically, the objective of arms control has been to regulate and make more predictable the nuclear competition, not to purport to abolish it.⁴⁹

Nye:

[O]nly a long-term political strategy of societal engagement and a jointly managed balance of power offer a real promise of escaping the dilemmas of deterrence.⁵⁰

Steinbruner:

The United States is primarily interested in reducing the level of strategic force deployments in order to alleviate a perceived threat to the U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile forces and a politically sensitive imbalance in weapons deployed in Europe. The Soviet Union is primarily interested in restricting the process of technical improvement in order to alleviate what it perceives as an emerging threat to Soviet ICBMs and ultimately to the entire structure of Soviet military forces.⁵¹

All of these provide different angles on the central stress of most Limiters—the use of arms agreements to provide strategic stability through mutual deterrence adapted to the needs and postures of both the United States and the Soviet Union. In addition, however, several Limiters stress arms agreements to avoid “accidental” war. Intriligator and Brito have been quoted above. And Drell, after putting stable deterrence in the “first and overriding” position, adds “a second goal of negotiations. . . . To initiate significant, timely, and verifiable reductions in the nuclear forces and destructive potential of both nations.”⁵²

⁴⁸McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, and Gerard Smith, “The President’s Choice: Star Wars or Arms Control,” *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1984, p. 274.

⁴⁹Walter Slocombe, “An Immediate Agenda for Arms Control,” *Survival*, September/October 1985, p. 207.

⁵⁰Nye, “Farewell to Arms Control?” p. 15.

⁵¹John Steinbruner, “Arms Control: Crisis or Compromise,” *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1985, p. 1036.

⁵²Drell, p. 37.

Not all Limiters would agree with Drell's stress, even though it is secondary, on reducing numbers of weapons. Many would subscribe to Schelling's complaint that:

The main difference between pre-1971 and post-1972 arms negotiations has been the shift of interest from the *character* of weapons to their *numbers*. In the United States, this is the common interest that has joined left and right, leaving almost no room in between. . . . The last two administrations have been intent on matching hard-target capabilities, number for number, almost without regard to whether denying strategic-weapon targets to the enemy—such as deploying untargetable weapons—was a superior alternative to matching hard-target capability.⁵³

Schelling's contention is that the Reagan administration as well as Carter's has adopted the numerical emphasis of some Limiters as an easy political path, leading to what he believes is the absurdity of the Reagan preference for the heavy apparently-first-strike multiple warhead MX missile over the mobile protected-retaliation single-warhead Midgetman because the latter would not only be more expensive per warhead but would also mean "more" missiles in an arms control agreement that counted vehicles rather than warheads.⁵⁴

Halperin makes another use of the concept of the different "character" of nuclear weapons, emphasizing the need to increase the distinction between the nuclears and the others:

[T]he United States [should] focus its efforts on stigmatizing nuclear weapons worldwide without raising concern that such efforts would undercut key components of American security. The United States would not only deny the utility of first use but would stigmatize the second use of nuclear weapons if such use was intended to be effective on a battlefield. . . . Though not eliminating the use of nuclear weapons as a tool of international diplomacy, the United States would want . . . to stigmatize these devices and emphasize the fundamental gap between them and instruments of war.⁵⁵

Also, like Kissinger but unlike the Reagan administration and most Extenders, the Limiters put the issues of verification of arms control agreements and Soviet compliance with the agreements into a context that weighs the military and political significance of violations and ambiguities rather than asking the single question: Did they violate or didn't they? Nye argues that:

⁵³Schelling, "What Went Wrong with Arms Control," pp. 225–226.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 228.

⁵⁵Halperin, pp. 138–139.

What is striking is that the opponents of arms control have managed over time to move issues with minor military significance from the margin to the center of the U.S.-Soviet relationship. By treating these issues as a litmus test of Soviet intentions and establishing their rectification as a condition for continued adherence to the numerical SALT limits (which both sides have observed), the skeptics have progressively narrowed the President's options. This does not mean the alleged violations should be ignored; it means that the President should have insisted that they be seriously negotiated in the Standing Consultative Commission (as they merited), rather than politicized and implanted at the heart of the relationship.⁵⁶

Their emphasis on arms agreements leads the Limiters to a wide variety of specific proposals for such agreements. The following list of examples illustrates the range of the proposals. Some of the variation in the list is due to the specificity of the proposed measures; they relate to the state of actual negotiations at the time that author put forth that proposal. What is notable throughout is that the Limiters pay as much attention to the details of proposed arms agreements as the Extenders do to the details of weapons and target discrimination.

- I recommend that we include a direct limit on the numbers of nuclear warheads on the long-range bombers and missiles in any future treaty negotiation. (Sidney Drell)⁵⁷
- The U.S. proposal is the one that would limit all strategic ballistic reentry vehicles to 5000. . . . The Soviet proposal is the one that would limit launchers for strategic ballistic missiles plus heavy bombers to 1800. . . . Taken together, these two proposals make particularly good sense. (Michael May, Associate Director, Lawrence Livermore Lab)⁵⁸
- In both [U.S. START negotiating] approaches, the reductions of the three principal commodities—ballistic missile weapons, ballistic missile throwweight, and bombers—would be negotiated separately. We propose a third approach: to aggregate the three commodities and negotiate constraints on them collectively. . . . If the United States and the Soviet Union are to seek a trade-off and a freedom to mix between throwweight and bombers, they must find a common currency. We propose such a currency: the standard weapon station. This currency

⁵⁶Nye, "Farewell to Arms Control?" p. 17.

⁵⁷Drell, p. 38.

⁵⁸Michael May, "A START Proposal," Research Note No. 14, Center for International and Strategic Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles, July 1983, p. 1.

expresses the throwweight of missiles in units of 400 kilograms. (Lieutenant General Glenn Kent)⁵⁹

- Arms control agreements should, therefore, be designed to improve the overall survivability of the nuclear forces of *both* sides. This can best be done through a combination of steps: by reducing the overall number of nuclear weapons and particularly of ballistic missile warheads; by permitting certain kinds of modernization (e.g., mobile missiles); by allowing the rearming of ICBMs; by regulating the introduction of new missiles; and by phasing out or preferentially reducing certain kinds of older systems (e.g., MIRVed missiles). (Former Defense Secretary Harold Brown and Lynn Davis)⁶⁰
- Now a new approach has arrived in the idea known as "build-down." In essence the build-down principle says that no new weapons should be deployed unless a larger number of existing weapons are destroyed. (Alton Frye)⁶¹
- Thus, a cooperative U.S.-Soviet limited strategic defense system might be a useful subject for consideration at the Geneva summit—not only as a compromise between the U.S. and Soviet positions, but as a positive step that is feasible, timely and in the interest of both nations in reducing the chances of nuclear war. (Michael Intriligator)⁶²

The very variety indicates where the Limiters put their thought and their weight.

The emphasis on arms agreement provides the primary reason that the Limiters oppose SDI. The title of the 1984 article on SDI by Bundy, Kennan, McNamara, and Smith sets forth their thesis: "The President's Choice: Star Wars or Arms Control." They contend that:

The President's program, because of the inevitable Soviet reaction to it, has already had a heavily damaging impact on prospects for early progress in strategic arms control. It has thrown a wild card into a game already impacted by mutual suspicion and a search on both sides for unattainable unilateral advantage.⁶³

⁵⁹Kent, pp. vi-vii.

⁶⁰Harold Brown and Lynn E. Davis, "Nuclear Arms Control: Where Do We Stand?" *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1984, p. 1159.

⁶¹Alton Frye, "Strategic Build-Down: A Context for Restraint," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1983/84, p. 293.

⁶²Michael D. Intriligator, "Why Not a 'Star Wars' Partnership?" *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 1985, Part IV, p. 5.

⁶³Bundy, Kennan, McNamara, and Smith, "The President's Choice: Star Wars or Arms Control," pp. 273-274.

More recently, the Reykjavik talks have led these four senior Limiters to concede that:

The Strategic Defense Initiative has proved to be a powerful bargaining lever. If indeed the Soviet government can have satisfactory constraints on strategic defense, it seems ready to conclude agreements greatly reducing offensive forces.⁶⁴

They then go on to endorse a form of SDI, but it is very different from either the President's hard-shell population defense or the military-site-defending aid to deterrence favored by many of the Extenders. They suggest instead, "In Iceland, President Reagan spoke of needing a defense for 'insurance' even after all American and Soviet missiles have been dismantled. That is apparently a quite different 'minimal' enterprise."⁶⁵

For other Limiters, however, even after Reykjavik, SDI remains the obstacle rather than the lever for arms agreements. Former CIA Director William Colby and David Riley contend that:

President Reagan made a clear choice in Iceland to move ahead with his Strategic Defense Initiative at the expense of the Antiballistic Missile Treaty of 1972. The decision is wrong for two basic reasons. It ignores the nuclear realities that make such a defense both practically impossible and politically destabilizing, and it ignores the major contribution the ABM treaty has made, since it was signed in 1972, to dampening the nuclear arms race and reducing the threat of nuclear war.⁶⁶

These words summarize most of the reasons Limiters have opposed SDI until now. A good deal of discussion has focused on technical feasibility, but most Limiters, like most Extenders, admit that nobody can yet know; most Limiters have favored a vigorous research program to find out and to hedge against Soviet breakthrough on missile defenses.⁶⁷ Worry about the effect of SDI on the existing and future arms agreements on which the Limiters put so much weight, however, together with the action-reaction model of the arms race, have produced strong opposition to both the President's vision and the military-site-defense version of many of the Extenders. To the extent

⁶⁴McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, and Gerard Smith. "Reykjavik's Grounds for Hope," *New York Times*, October 19, 1986, p. 23 (National Edition).

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶William E. Colby and David Riley, "Respect the ABM Treaty," *New York Times*, October 24, 1986, p. 31 (National Edition).

⁶⁷See Levine, "The SDI Debate as a Continuation of History," pp. 24-27.

that Reykjavik has changed this, it is, as Bundy, Kennan, McNamara, and Smith say, in favor of a "quite different 'minimal' enterprise."

As with the Extenders, the school of thought I call the Limiters contains a group of people with many different views. Nonetheless, they come together on several major common themes:

- Stable deterrence has prevented nuclear war, and it is all we have at this time to continue preventing it.
- Deterrence is largely existential, and the discriminating postures and strategies proposed by the Extenders have little to do with the matter.
- Although we should plan for counterforce rather than counter-city targeting, the prospects for meaningful damage limitation are slim indeed.
- Nuclear accident is possible and we should take steps to avoid it.
- The way out in the short run is to enhance stable deterrence through arms agreements with the Soviet Union; in the long run, such agreements may get us off the merry-go-round, but we have to get through the short run in order to reach the long.

V. THE DISARMERS

We know that a holocaust may not occur at all. If one does occur, the adversaries may not use all their weapons. If they do use all their weapons, the global effects, in the ozone and elsewhere, may be moderate. And if the effects are not moderate but extreme, the ecosphere may prove resilient enough to withstand them without breaking down catastrophically. These all are substantial reasons for supposing that mankind will not be extinguished in a nuclear holocaust, or even that extinction in a holocaust is unlikely, and they tend to calm our fear and reduce our sense of urgency. Yet at the same time we are compelled to admit that there *may* be a holocaust, that the adversaries *may* use all their weapons, that the global effects, including effects of which we are as yet unaware, *may* be severe, that the ecosphere *may* suffer catastrophic breakdown, and that our species *may* be extinguished. We are left with uncertainty.

Once we learn that a holocaust *might* lead to extinction we have no right to gamble, because if we lose, the game will be over, and neither we nor anyone else will ever get another chance.

Therefore, although, scientifically speaking, there is all the difference in the world between the mere possibility that a holocaust will bring about extinction and the certainty of it, morally they are the same, and we have no choice but to address the issue of nuclear weapons as though we knew for a certainty that their use would put an end to our species.

—Jonathan Schell¹

The Disarmers are a diverse group, more diverse than the other schools because in the classifying schema set forth here they go from a boundary near the more worried of the Limiters—the bishops and Drell, for example—to the theoretical infinity of unilateral and absolute disarmament. Yet in the 1980s it is very difficult to discover unilateral disarmers among those who write on the subject.

It was not always thus. It would be difficult in the 1980s to find disagreement with Nye's conclusion that consequences must dominate moral reasoning about nuclear weapons, but in the 1950s and 1960s,

¹Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, Avon, New York, 1982, quoted in Jonathan Schell, *The Abolition*, Avon, New York, 1984, pp. 27–28.

many Disarmers agreed with the American Friends Service Committee pamphlet favoring unilateral disarmament: "Here I stand. Regardless of relevance or consequence I can do no other."² Thirty years later, however, it is the presumed consequences of postures and strategies that govern the writings of the Disarmers as much as the other schools; and the world is recognized as being too complex for simple unilateral disarmament to be advocated seriously on moral or other grounds.

The Schell statement with which this section began turns entirely on potential consequences of nuclear war, and the enormity of these consequences is one theme uniting the Disarmers. This theme would bring in many Limiters and even some Extenders, however. What distinguishes the Disarmers is the feeling that so long as nuclear weapons exist extinction is possible, which leads them to concentrate on getting rid of the weapons one way or another. They therefore dismiss deterrence as no more than a state we must move through as quickly as possible on the way to more permanent solutions.

This discussion of the Disarmers is structured somewhat differently from those of the other two schools. The next subsection examines their two major analytical propositions, but no discussion is presented on value judgments, because the Disarmers' single overwhelming judgment—any chance of nuclear war is intolerable—is explicit in the opening quote from Schell and is implicit or explicit in everything else set forth. After the subsection on Analyses, therefore, the final subsection takes up several Disarmers and discusses their policy recommendations and how they got there.

ANALYSES

The Disarmer's two basic analytical propositions, matching those of the two other schools, are:

- The existence of nuclear weapons, and their use, even for deterrence, will lead to nuclear war and holocaust.
- The Soviet Union wants to get off the nuclear bandwagon at least as badly as we do.

The Schell statement illustrates one aspect of the unusability of nuclear weapons: If they are used at all, there is a chance that the use will escalate to the extinction of the race, and any such chance is intolerable. The statement itself, however, is worded to make an *a*

²American Friends Service Committee, *Speak Truth to Power*, Philadelphia, 1955, p. 68.

fortiori case: "Even if we accept all of the most optimistic premises, the residual chance of extinction is intolerable." The Disarmers, of course, do not accept these optimistic premises, but agree rather with the Limiters who fear nuclear escalation and uncontrollability (but unlike the Disarmers believe that stable deterrence is the best way to avoid the first step toward holocaust).

Logically, one initial premise precedes the one that connects use of nuclear weapons to ultimate extinction of the race. It is the analytical connection from the existence of weapons to their use. Schell's existentialism, unlike Bundy's, suggests that the existence of nuclear weapons leads not to deterrence but to use:

[T]he truth was that there was nothing wrong with the doctrine of deterrence which was not wrong simply with the possession of vast nuclear arsenals—with or without the doctrine of deterrence. The reason that no repair of the doctrine was possible was that the problem did not lie in doctrine. It lay in the world's possession of nuclear arsenals—in their "existential" features, if you like. For, whatever government spokesmen might say about possessing nuclear weapons only to prevent their use, the inescapable truth was that possession inevitably implied use.³

A similar view is expressed quantitatively and slightly less pessimistically by Professor George Rathjens of MIT:

Some years ago, I concluded that 90% reductions in 1985 levels would likely mean reductions in fatalities in the event of large-scale nuclear war by factors of around two to ten, depending on the scenario. Reductions on this scale would hardly be a solution to the nuclear problem, but should they be denigrated as meaningless?⁴

And Randall Forsberg turns around the Extenders' concept of the counterforce strategy as limiting damage: "The quest for improved counterforce capability has driven the arms race far past the point where each contender can destroy the other's society and much else besides."⁵

The chief analytical point of the Disarmers is that it is not the plans for the use of nuclear weapons that determine what happens—counterforce plans and weapons will lead to the destruction of society, not military targets—but the existence of the weapons. Existence leads to use leads to extinction, and larger numbers lead to higher probabilities of use and extinction.

³Schell, *The Abolition*, pp. 84–85.

⁴George Rathjens, "First Thoughts About Problems Facing EXPRO," January 25, 1985, p. 11 (mimeo.).

⁵Randall Forsberg, "A Bilateral Nuclear Weapons Freeze," *Scientific American*, November 1982, p. 52.

None of this is necessary, however, because the Soviets want to get away from the nuclear threat as badly as we do. The fault now lies more with us than with them. In two newspaper pieces preceding the November 1985 Geneva summit meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev, Princeton professor and *Nation* columnist Stephen Cohen analyzed successively the Reagan administration's approach to the Russians and the limited American criticism of that approach on the one hand, and the reality of Soviet needs and views on the other.

[N]ot one influential group or institution has mounted a sustained opposition to Reagan's militarized approach to the Soviet Union, either by rejecting its underlying political premises or by offering the only alternative, a broad policy of detente. As a result, mainstream discussion of U.S.-Soviet relations is narrow and superficial . . . avoiding fundamental questions about the long-term goal of American policy. Is it to live peacefully with the Soviet Union as a superpower? To roll back Soviet power in the world? To destroy the Soviet system? No coherent policy is possible without answers to these and other questions.⁶

In reality, everything indicates that Gorbachev is the first reform-minded Soviet leader since Nikita S. Khrushchev came to power in the 1950s. . . . Gorbachev needs detente-like relations with the United States if he is to become any kind of strong reform leader in the deeply conservative system. . . . [He] must overcome widespread objections from the party elite and state bureaucracy that even modest forms of decentralization and liberalization are too dangerous because of "the growing American threat."⁷

And a year later, after Reykjavik, Fred Neal of Claremont Graduate School and the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations expounded on the same theme of American need to work with Gorbachev against the bad guys in the Kremlin:

There are three main points of view among Soviet decisionmakers about how to deal with the United States. One is to continue urging arms control agreements, and making concessions toward that end, as at present. A second is that it is impossible to "do business with Reagan" and thus Soviet approaches should wait for a new administration. A third holds that the United States is irrevocably oriented to cold war hostility and that any accommodation is impossible, no matter who is President. Mr. Gorbachev has up to now opted for the first view, but in the face of what Moscow considers repeated rebuffs, this is unlikely to prevail for very long.⁸

⁶Stephen F. Cohen, "Gorbachev Is Ripe for a Deal," *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1985, Part IV, p. 5.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Fred Warner Neal, "A Ray of Hope for Agreement on Nuclear Arms," *New York Times*, November 19, 1986.

These statements were fairly radical at the time they were written, in 1985 and even 1986. Limiters would have hoped that the Soviet Union was really changing but would have prudently reserved judgment. The rush of events in the late 1980s, however, has been such that a year or two later, most Limiters would accept Cohen's and Neal's descriptions of Gorbachev as descriptions of reality, and even some Extenders might hope.

In any case, the two analytical points are basic to almost all Disarmers: that the line from the existence of nuclear weapons to the extinction of mankind is too direct to be tolerable and that we can appropriately work out solutions with the Soviets, who increasingly share these same perceptions. These two points plus the value judgment that any chance of nuclear war is intolerable lead to no agreed set of specific recommendations, however.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Where the Disarmers want to get is clear: a world without nuclear weapons. Having rejected the simplicity of unilateral disarmament and "I can do no other," however, Disarmers recognize the extreme difficulties of getting from here to there in the real world, and they set forth many possible measures. Those discussed here are merely illustrative.

Schell's recommendations are substantially beyond those of the Limiters. He himself makes the differentiation in discussing the Catholic bishops' statement:

Having made . . . firm and far-reaching moral judgments, the bishops do not go on to make equally firm and far-reaching recommendations for action on the basis of them. Rather, they subscribe to such moderate and partial proposals as the nuclear freeze⁹ and no first use. Like the peace movement as a whole, the bishops are diagnostic radicals but prescriptive moderates.¹⁰

Having opted for radical prescription as well as diagnosis, Schell dismisses as impractical several common solutions such as world government. Unlike some of his confreres, he separates peace from justice and admits that his solution for peace leaves and even perpetuates injustice:

⁹The freeze is treated here as a Disarmers' proposal. It is, however, close to the line between the Disarmers and the Limiters.

¹⁰Schell, p. 90.

Our first step would be to accept the political verdict that has been delivered by deterrence, and formalize the stalemate. . . . We can, in a manner of speaking, adopt our present world, with all its injustices and other imperfections, as our ideal, and then seek the most sensible and moderate means of preserving it. . . . The next question is whether, after formalizing the status quo, we can reduce our reliance on the extreme means by which we now uphold it, and how far that reduction can go. . . . But . . . we actually rely on the doomsday machine to serve another end: the preservation of our sovereignty. We still exploit the peril of extinction for our political ends. . . . Given this political reality—which shows no sign of changing soon—it appears that, in one form or another, our reliance on the nuclear threat cannot be broken. Nevertheless, even under these terms we have far more flexibility than we have thought. It is a flexibility that, I believe, extends all the way to the abolition of nuclear arms. On the face of it, there appears to be a contradiction between the two goals we have set for ourselves. It appears that we want to keep the stalemate but to abolish the weapons that made it possible.¹¹

The paradox set forth in the last two sentences makes Schell appear to be writing the whodunit of nuclear strategy: “The room was locked from the inside. How did the murderer make his escape?” His answer is worthy, if not of Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie, at least of the better of the modern mystery pulps. It is a four-part world agreement, in which the first part is the objective and the fourth the hidden solution to the mystery.

The key is to enter into an agreement abolishing nuclear arms. Nations would first agree . . . to have not world government, in which all nations are fused into one nation, but its exact opposite—a multiplicity of inviolate nations pledged to leave each other alone.

[A] second provision of the agreement would stipulate that the size of conventional forces be limited and balanced.

[P]robably as a separate, third provision of the agreement—anti-nuclear defensive forces would be permitted. . . .

However, none of these defensive arrangements would offer much protection if the agreement failed to accompany them with one more provision. The worst case . . . is not mere cheating, but blatant, open violation of the agreement by a powerful and ruthless nation that is determined to intimidate or subjugate other nations, or the whole world, by suddenly and swiftly building up, and perhaps using, an overwhelming nuclear arsenal. . . . Therefore a fourth provision of the abolition agreement would permit nations to hold themselves in a particular, defined state of readiness for nuclear rearmament.¹²

¹¹Ibid., pp. 140–143.

¹²Ibid., pp. 146–150.

Schell's argument is that the power to rearm is the deterrent, parallel to today's deterrent, but at a zero level of existing nuclear weapons. He has received substantial, although not universal, praise in the Disarmers' community for getting the murderer into and out of the locked room.

Other Disarmer recommendations take directions different from Schell's. In his Introduction to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* book in which some of the Disarmers' material quoted here (and some of the Limiters' as well) appears, then editor of the *Bulletin*, the late Harrison Brown, wrote that:

Although I am not so naive as to suppose that a full-fledged world government can be created in the near future, it should nevertheless be possible for the nations of the world to agree upon a legal code covering the more critical elements of war and peace and to establish the necessary enforcement machinery.¹³

This view is much more common among the Disarmers than is Schell's rejection of world law. Its roots go back to the period immediately after World War II, when the World Federalists, reacting to the failure of the League of Nations and the perception that the United Nations promised little additional strength, formed their serious but small movement for a world federal government patterned on that of this country. The seminal work in the field, and perhaps still the best because of the lack of opportunity to test or change the concepts, was the 1960 book, *World Peace Through World Law*.¹⁴

George Rathjens, an MIT political scientist and an alumnus of the Harvard-MIT seminar of the 1950s and 1960s, is more pessimistic than Schell or Brown and, in the end, perhaps more radical. He paints a very different picture of the failures of the 1970s from those of Nitze and Schelling, quoted at the beginning of this report. Nitze blamed them on the Russians, Schelling on the loss of concept and the stress on counterforce. For Rathjens, however, the problems are much more fundamental:

What accounts for the dismal record? . . . The overwhelming point is that all of these efforts have focused on constraining the development and/or deployment of the weapons themselves . . . rather than on the reasons nations want to acquire weapons. Focusing on weapons is not likely to be a very useful approach when they are so easily acquired. Moreover it is deceptive almost to the point of being a gigantic fraud: there is the implicit suggestion that controls of weapons of the kind that have been tried will solve the problem—or at least make a big difference—when there is no real reason for so believing. . . .

¹³Harrison Brown, "Introduction" to Ackland and McGuire (eds.), p. xvi.

¹⁴Grenville Clark and Louis B. Sohn, *World Peace Through World Law*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960.

There is a widespread belief that successful negotiations are possible only "from positions of strength." Whether true or not, the assumption leads to accretion of weapons in order to bargain effectively. . . .

Negotiations relating to strategic weapons have been predicated, at least on the U.S. side, in large measure on the assumption that a major objective should be to give impetus to changes in strategic force postures that could make disarming "first strikes" against land-based missile forces less feasible. A result has been to exaggerate grossly the importance of this particular "scenario" relative to virtually all others that could lead to catastrophe. . . .

While some . . . proposals imply modest reductions in numbers of strategic weapons and even selective reduction in "counterforce" weapons, it is hard to believe that they can lead to a reduction in either the probability of nuclear war or the level of damage should one occur, much less to the elimination of the nuclear threat. . . . [The] levels of weapons will remain so high as to make likely the near-total destruction of the major combatants.¹⁵

This is actual pessimism, not the *a fortiori* "it could happen" reasoning of Schell. Rathjens also rejects Schell's deterrence by threat of rearming as being overly optimistic, contending that under Schell's scheme:

(1) The time required for nations to assemble weapons would vary enormously from one country to another. . . . (2) The time required for weapons production could be shortened by advance preparation. . . . (3) The time could be lengthened by destruction of weapons production facilities using "conventional weapons."¹⁶

Rathjens's own recommendations come out somewhere between world government and a world police force maintained by the larger powers and with some apparent doubt that either would work:

In [the] long term, I have visions of two alternative world order arrangements.

One is a world where nuclear weapons would have no use; a world in which no nations (or groups) that could acquire them (or that might have squirrelled away a few) would have grievances or concerns that could plausibly justify their wanting them (or using them). This implies universally acceptable means for the peaceful adjudication of differences that might arise between nations or groups. . . .

In my alternative vision, there would be at least some nations or groups with plausible motives to acquire (or keep) nuclear weapons. That could not be tolerated, so the implication is a police authority that could effectively prevent it anywhere that it might be a feasible or worrisome possibility.

¹⁵Rathjens, pp. 8-10.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 11.

I fear that my second model is more realistic than the first.¹⁷

If Schell, Brown, and Rathjens represent different aspects of Nye's "morality of consequences" built upon the Disarmers' analyses and value judgments, psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton returns to the morality of motives and means more common in the 1960s. His article, "Toward a Nuclear-Age Ethos," is not explicitly intended as a set of political or strategic recommendations; yet the clear implication is: Were individuals to adopt this ethos, that fact would change the world. Lifton lists "ten principles . . . already adopted by a growing number of people."

We face a new dimension of destruction—not a matter of disaster or even of a war—but rather of an end: an end to human civilization and perhaps humankind.

That nuclear end must be rejected. We must commit ourselves to the flow and continuity of human life and to the products of the human imagination.

We either survive or die as a species. Nuclear weapons create a universally shared fate—a technologically imposed unity of all humankind.

Collective human power can bring about change, awareness, and ultimately human survival.

A key to that life power lies in the renunciation of nuclearism—of the dependency on, and even worship of, nuclear weapons.

A world without nuclear weapons is possible—a world that directs its energies toward more humane goals and looks to more genuine human security.

The step must be taken away from resignation—from "waiting for the bomb"—toward commitment to combatting it.

In these personal, individual efforts, one's everyday working professional existence and creative concerns may be connected with the struggle against nuclear weapons.

This struggle does not call one to embrace hopelessness and despair, but rather a fuller existence.

The struggle to preserve humankind lends a renewed sense of human possibility; one feels part of prospective historical and evolutionary achievements.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 13–14.

¹⁸Robert Jay Lifton, "Toward a Nuclear-Age Ethos," in Ackland and McGuire (eds.), pp. 353–359.

Most of the Disarmers tend to concentrate on the long-run vision, whether personal like Lifton or political like Schell, Brown, and Rathjens. Some take short-run positions close to the Limiters, but more, like Rathjens, dismiss short-run arms control negotiations as having little effect even if successful. One exception is the Nuclear Freeze movement, the concept of which was initiated by Randall Forsberg. The freeze recommendations *are* short-run, and they thereby contrast with the far more radical long-run recommendations set forth above. The movement itself is thus close to the boundary between the Disarmers and the Limiters. It is discussed under the Disarmer rubric because its primary objective is other than the stable deterrence most of the Limiters see as the best situation obtainable in the foreseeable future, and because it sees the freeze as a concrete step toward a better long-run solution. According to Forsberg,

To end the danger of nuclear war the nations must not merely freeze nuclear weapons but abolish them. The freeze represents a modest but significant step toward abolition. It would terminate the technological arms race and shut down entirely this wasteful and dangerous form of human competition.¹⁹

His description and rationale for the freeze is that it

goes beyond other arms-control measures proposed in the past 25 years to put a stop to the production, testing and, implicitly, development of nuclear weapons as well as their deployment. By the same simplicity that has given it wide popular appeal²⁰ the freeze proposal responds directly to an ominous turn in the arms race. The bilateral freeze would preclude the production of a new generation of "counterforce" weapons by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. . . .

The time is propitious for a bilateral freeze. Today the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are closer to parity in nuclear arms than they have been at any time since World War II. . . . The bilateral freeze would preserve this parity. It would prevent the emergence of a new, destabilizing U.S. advantage in counterforce capability. . . . And it would forestall the inevitable effort by the U.S.S.R. to match U.S. developments.

As spelled out in the "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race," a freeze on both sides would stop the following: the production of fissionable material (uranium 235 and plutonium) for nuclear weapons; the fabrication, assembly and testing of nuclear warheads; the testing, production and deployment of missiles designed to deliver nuclear

¹⁹Forsberg, p. 61.

²⁰At the time of Forsberg's article, November 1982, and subsequently, the freeze concept won a number of local advisory referendums. More recently, however, it has apparently disappeared politically.

warheads, and the testing of new types of aircraft and the production and deployment of any additional aircraft designed primarily to deliver nuclear weapons. . . .

A strictly enforced freeze that includes production and testing as well as deployment could lead after some years to a decline in the reliability and readiness of existing nuclear armaments. . . . [Even] though reduced confidence in the nuclear arsenal may decrease the likelihood of nuclear war and make nuclear weapons seem less relevant to security, uncertainty in this regard is bound to make most people feel less secure rather than more so. Hence a freeze should be defined to allow the maintenance of existing nuclear forces until reductions can be agreed on with due deliberation.²¹

The Limiters' views toward the freeze are ambivalent. Drell would like to like it, but can't quite:

I wish to be clear that as a technician I find difficulties with a comprehensive freeze as literal policy. . . . I have, however, supported the freeze campaign and I continue to support it as a mandate for arms control.²²

Halperin favors a freeze, but within the context of his overall plan to separate and stigmatize nuclear weapons:

[A]daptation of a freeze would symbolize the acceptance by both sides of the precept I propose here: Nuclear devices are not weapons with which wars can be fought. Hence the details of the balance are of little importance and both sides can stop at whatever point they happen to be.²³

Even so, the diversity of the Disarmers' policy recommendations matches or overmatches that of the Limiters. What differs is the objective for which these proposals are intended. For the Limiters, the theme is *Stabilize*. For the Extenders, it is *Control*. For the Disarmers, it is:

- Get rid of these things; nothing counts unless it is a step toward that goal.

²¹Forsberg, pp. 52-61.

²²Drell, p. 27.

²³Halperin, p. 141.

VI. CONCLUSIONS: THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Alphonse Karr, *Les Gueppes*

Once again, the old French proverb fits the case. Through the past 30 years of debate over strategic nuclear arms, some of the debaters have changed, many have not. Some of the players have changed sides, or at least have moved across the arbitrary borders between the schools defined here. But the ideas have remained remarkably steady in the face of major technological and political change. As has been suggested above, one reason for this is the inherent untestability of strategic nuclear policy. Another is that the policy recommendations made by the debaters are logical conclusions stemming from strong premises—from fundamental value judgments and from analyses of factors in the real world that change even more slowly than technology and surface politics.

This is true of the past; it is likely to be true of at least the near future. For the future, the major potential technological change of a magnitude that might bring about a discontinuity in strategic thinking would be the proving out of a version of SDI close to President Reagan's perfect population defense, but few really believe that will come to pass. The major potential political change is a real redirection of the Soviet Union, led or begun by Gorbachev; at this writing Western analysts are unwilling to predict anything that radical, although some hint at it while explaining how unlikely it is to defeat the inertia of the Soviet system.

The one best prediction for the future is that the unpredictable will occur, and it will make a difference. The remainder of this section takes up the past roots of the current debate and uses the past and current debate as a basis for a discussion of the future—the author's own synthesis and suggestions.

THE PAST: ROOTS OF THE CURRENT DEBATE

In *The Arms Debate*, I constructed five schools of thought for the early 1960s:

- *Anti-War Systemists*, the unilateral disarmers exemplified by Bertrand Russell and various American religious pacifists.
- *Anti-War Marginalists*, who stressed rapid and sometimes novel moves toward disarmament treaties. These included many academics and a good many Democrats of the wing that had preferred Stevenson to Kennedy.
- *Middle Marginalists*, the central group of strategists and arms controllers, including at that time Schelling, Wohlstetter, Kissinger, Herman Kahn, and McNamara and his Whiz Kids.
- *Anti-Communist Marginalists*, who coalesced around the concept of a “protracted conflict” between the free and the Communist worlds. At that time, the group consisted of academics and other commentators; some of them subsequently entered government in the Nixon and Reagan administrations.
- *Anti-Communist Systemists*, who at least in their rhetoric were willing to take a substantial risk even of nuclear war to wipe out Communism. Barry Goldwater, in his writings before he ran for president, was the most respectable example.

These five schools were displayed around a horseshoe-shaped figure intended to illustrate the point that the Systemists of the “left” and “right” were in many ways closer to one another than to those who professed similar but more moderate views.¹ The schools of the earlier analysis do not map directly onto the three discussed here. Such divisions are arbitrary in any case, and what was convenient for analysis and exposition in the early 1960s is not for the late 1980s. In fact, as the debate has matured, some real movement has taken place among the schools:

- The unilateral disarmers of the 1960s—the Anti-War Systemists—have pretty much disappeared from public view. But as the Systemists moved toward laying out what they saw as more pragmatic paths to universal disarmament, those Anti-War Marginalists who had previously accepted deterrence and arms control only as a state of transition to disarmament joined them to form the school called here the Disarmers.

More important in its effect on the policymaking center, the Middle Marginalist consensus that included most of the strategists and arms controllers of the early 1960s—the “establishment” officials and consultants—broke in two; and the major division now, the focus of the current strategic arms debate, is down the middle of that consensus.

¹Levine, *The Arms Debate*, p. 49.

- McNamara's movement from the strategic consensus to the Limiters' doubts about the strategies of the early 1960s has been described. Others who made the same shift as the consensus fractured (and who also signed the no-first-use *Atlantic Monthly* article) include Bundy, Halperin, and William Kaufmann.

The Anti-War Marginalist school of the early 1960s had had something of an anti-establishment academic coloring to it; many of its members were non-Cambridge professors of such non-policy disciplines as sociology and psychology (rather than the economics and international relations of the establishment academics). Among the hard-nosed insiders of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, these soft academics were a bit beyond the pale. With the inclusion of the ex-Secretary of Defense, the ex-Director of the National Security Council, and others with unquestioned credentials for pragmatism and experience, however, the new weight of the Limiters has changed the debate from the "establishment" versus the "softs" to a much tougher one within the policymaking center itself. The Limiters are "outs" under the Reagan administration, but they (more accurately, their political counterparts) are electable "outs."

Nonetheless, the *ideas* of the Limiters are very similar to those that had been held by the nonestablishment Anti-War Marginalists. McNamara, Bundy, and their colleagues, having helped initiate the various consensus concepts of counterforce and other forms of nuclear control, and then having examined these concepts both intellectually and from decisionmaking positions where it sometimes appeared that they might have to implement them, found the concepts wanting and opted instead for existential deterrence and arms agreements.

- The other part of the early-1960s strategic consensus—Wohlstetter, Nitze, Iklé, Herman Kahn before his death—stayed with the central concepts of controlled counterforce and suspicion of the Soviets and became the core group of the Extenders. Some symmetry with the other (Anti-War) end of the spectrum exists. As noted, the Anti-War Systemists' passion for unilateral disarmament has withered. The Anti-Communist Systemists' parallel drive to extirpate Communism even at substantial risk of nuclear conflict was already rather weak by the early 1960s, but many of the Anti-Communist

Marginalists' "protracted conflict" concepts have also tended to fade away. Worldwide communism has fractured and divided even if in the view of the anti-Communists Soviet aggressiveness has not moderated; further, as some of the Anti-Communists took posts in the Nixon administration, they ran up against the limits of the possible. At the same time, many of those who had been in the middle moved perceptibly toward making their anti-Communism more explicit (Wohlstetter's earlier writings, for example, tend to assume rather than describe the litany of Soviet leaders' sins against their own people quoted above from his 1983 piece). These converging moves have made it possible to include both the old Anti-Communist Marginalist school and the controlled counterforce wing of the Middle Marginalist school comfortably under the Extenders' rubric.

The changes in the schools from the early 1960s to the late 1980s have thus involved some rearrangement of the chairs in which various individuals sat, and some shifts in political power and relevance. The ideas associated with the extremes of unilateral disarmament and protracted conflict have atrophied. In the middle, however, in spite of the individual rearrangements, the concepts have remained remarkably constant. Table 1 is reproduced from the relevant portions of two tables in *The Arms Debate*.²

What is notable about the table is that the key views of the 1963 schools transmute themselves almost whole into those of the late 1980s. The Anti-War Marginalists' stable deterrence, the impossibility of melioration or control of nuclear war, the need for arms control, and the tractability of the Soviet Union all move to the Limiters without change. The Middle Marginalists' stress on control and melioration and their trepidation about the Soviet Union, together with the Anti-Communist Marginalists' emphasis on the importance of nuclear weapons and threats in political conflicts, all map directly into the Extenders' current views.

Even the words seem familiar. Among the Anti-War Marginalists/Limiters:

Arthur Waskow (1962)

Rational control must rest on extremely effective communications, and communications would surely be one of the first casualties of a thermonuclear war. . . . Assuming that an American government is still functioning after the attack, it will have to try to give orders

²Ibid., Table 1, pp. 212-213, and Table 2, p. 278.

without knowing its own surviving defenses, the power left to its own striking arm, or the targets still requiring destruction in the enemy's territory. In fact, such a government may have great difficulty in delivering its orders at all. . . . The careful, second-by-second control that would be absolutely necessary to keep a counter-force war actually directed against forces would be impossible, and the counter-force war would degenerate into a completely disordered nuclear disaster.³

Amitai Etzioni (1962)

[E]scalation can take us not only from cold war to hot, from limited war to world war, and from conventional conflict to nuclear attack—it may also lead us that one step further to nuclear cataclysm.⁴

Wiesner (1961)

While a system of mutual deterrence is less attractive in many ways than properly safeguarded total disarmament, it may be somewhat easier to achieve and could be regarded as a transient phase on the way toward the goal of total disarmament. . . . [In the case of] a stable deterrent system used as a component of an arms-limitation arrangement . . . instead of completely eliminating nuclear weapons and delivery systems, a small number will be permitted to remain. While this situation is not as desirable as would be the actual elimination of all such weapons, it must certainly be preferred to the present unlimited arms race and actual elimination probably cannot be achieved.⁵

Charles Osgood (1962)

[T]he Russians would accept an unambiguous opportunity to reduce world tensions for reasons of good sense *even* if not for reasons of good will. . . . Recent travellers to Russia . . . have been impressed by the "mirror image" of our own attitudes that they find among both the people and the leaders there.⁶

And as for the Anti-War Marginalists/Limiters, so for the Middle and Anti-Communist Marginalists/Extenders:

³Arthur I. Waskow, *The Limits of Defense*, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1962, pp. 26–27.

⁴Amitai Etzioni, *The Hard Way to Peace: A New Strategy*, Collier, New York, 1962, p. 57.

⁵Jerome B. Wiesner, "Comprehensive Arms Limitation Systems," in Donald G. Brennan (ed.), *Arms Control, Disarmament, and National Security*, George Braziller, New York, 1961, pp. 215–218.

⁶Charles E. Osgood, "Reciprocal Initiatives" in James Roosevelt (ed.), *The Liberal Papers*, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1962, p. 207.

Table 1
1963 VALUES, ANALYSES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Values	Schools		
	Anti-War Marginalists	Middle Marginalists	Anti-Communist Marginalists
	Prevention of war	Prevention of war Melioration of war	Defense of freedom against Communism Forcing Communist retreat
Analyses: War	<p>War will be thermonuclear</p> <p>Weapons can only be used to prevent war if anything</p> <p>War starts by accident, irrationality miscalculation</p> <p>"Limited Wars" escalate</p> <p>Arms races cause wars</p> <p>Once war starts control and melioration are impossible</p>	<p>War tends to become thermonuclear</p> <p>Weapons are primarily to deter war but we may have to strike (first or second)</p> <p>Rationality can exert substantial control over irrationality; accidental war requires both an accident and a wrong response; the "Paradox of Deterrence"; war can be self-generating</p> <p>Escalation can be controlled through proper attention to tactical nuclear weapons, conventional forces, etc.</p> <p>The arms race can perhaps be controlled</p> <p>Control and melioration of war may be possible, particularly in those cases where we strike first</p>	<p>War is a spectrum</p> <p>Weapons are political instruments</p> <p>War starts primarily for political reasons</p> <p>Nuclear weapons dominate war and conventional forces are important mainly for "psychology"</p> <p>The arms race can be exploited</p> <p>Control is possible and is necessary for the political exploitation of war</p>

Table 1—continued

	Schools		
	Anti-War Marginalists	Middle Marginalists	Anti-Communist Marginalists
Opponent	<p>USSR is becoming consolidationist in order to conserve its successes; clashes of interest are psychological</p> <p>USSR is moving away from military means to achieve its objectives</p>	<p>USSR is still carefully aggressive in the short run but perhaps it may change in the long; clashes of interest are real</p> <p>USSR uses military means for political ends, but is willing to take little nuclear risk</p>	<p>USSR is implacably aggressive and out to bury us, with no sign of change</p> <p>USSR is carrying on a "protracted conflict" with all means, although it now shies away from high nuclear risk</p>
Recommendations Strategic; Arms Control	<p>Short run: stable deterrence</p> <p>Long run: world peace through universal disarmament to be gained by negotiations which may start with unilateral initiatives</p>	<p>Short run: make war less likely and/or terrible by controls over numbers and/or uses of armaments to be gained by unilateral steps and/or tacit or explicit multilateral agreements</p> <p>Long run: a series of short runs</p>	<p>Short run: unilateral control over warfare to make war thinkable as a political tool</p> <p>Long run: agreement with Communists delineating areas of conflict and common interest</p>
Deterrence	Only as a part of short-run stable deterrence	Various mixes of arms control and political deterrence; of controlled counterforce and/or counterforce targets; of second and first strike	Controlled deterrence as a political weapon; "win strike second" as a shield against enemy escalation

Wohlstetter (1961)

As for efforts to control the violence of nuclear war, whether by making some distinction between military and urban targets, or by controlling the application of force within each category, or as part of a bargaining process to force termination of the war on more favorable terms, they become a rather remote possibility with nuclear diffusion.⁷

Herman Kahn (1961)

[M]any strategists, and even some arms controllers, overlook the important requirement that a failure of stability should result in limited and "acceptable" consequences.⁸

Richard Fryklund (1962)

This strategy also relies upon our long-range weapons to deter attacks on the United States and its major allies, but it would control the use of these weapons to give us the maximum chance of winning with the minimum amount of death and destruction. . . . Deterrence would be continued *during* the war.⁹

Harry Willets (1961)

The Soviet leaders, to judge by their behavior to date, are unlikely to accept as in their national interest any major measures of disarmament or arms control that do not give them substantial strategic or political advantages. They may well be interested in reducing the dangers of war and the burden of armaments. But they apparently do not regard either of these tasks as so urgent that it cannot be combined with and made dependent on achievement of broader political objectives.¹⁰

The point is not that nothing has changed over 25 years. The Limiters are more likely now to take stable deterrence for the foreseeable future as a goal than as Wiesner's step on the way to total disarmament; control of the violence of nuclear war has become much more central to Wohlstetter's thinking than it was in his reference to proliferation. But the specifics illustrated by the quotations from the early 1960s, together with the familiar general thrusts set forth in Table 1, indicate how similar the current debate is to the earlier one.

⁷Albert Wohlstetter, "Nuclear Sharing: NATO and the N+1 Country," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1961, p. 383.

⁸Herman Kahn, "The Arms Race and Some of its Hazards," in Brennan, p. 102.

⁹Richard Fryklund, *100 Million Lives*, Macmillan, New York, 1962, pp. 40-41.

¹⁰Harry T. Willets, "Disarmament and Soviet Foreign Policy," in The American Assembly, *Arms Control: Issues for the Public*, Prentice Hall, New York, 1961, p. 172.

The similarity of the arguments is particularly striking because they have remained constant in the face of truly major technological, political, and strategic changes over the quarter-century.

- Technologically, although ABM had been thought of by the early 1960s, it hardly came up in the debate. Even more important, however, MIRV, which has turned on end the basic strategic balance, changing it from the stable it-takes-more-than-one-to-kill-one to the unstable one-shot-kills-many, is not mentioned at all in the literature of the early 1960s.
- Politically, the Soviet-Chinese rift was beginning to be recognized in the West in the early 1960s, but it had not yet affected strategic discussions. Most Sovietologists did not expect the diffusion of multicentric Communism, and only a few saw the loosening of Soviet bonds on the East European satellites. Internally, the Soviet Union was thought to be strong and vigorous, in contrast to the current Western perception that it is in severe internal economic and perhaps even political trouble. True, Khrushchev then was thought of by some Westerners as Gorbachev is now, but Khrushchev did not last.
- Strategically, after the missile-gap scare of the late 1950s, which had wound down by the end of 1961, it was recognized that the United States was still far ahead of the Soviet Union in nuclear delivery capabilities. Today, parity is recognized by all; Soviet superiority is feared by a few.

One reason for the invariant strategic nuclear debate in the midst of radically changing circumstances is its theological character: The premises remain untestable, and it is therefore easy to believe or rationalize almost anything. In the debate over arms policy for the Third World, by contrast, Vietnam conclusively disproved many previously accepted premises—e.g., that an American administration could operate a foreign and military policy without regard for domestic public opinion.

Perhaps more basic to the constancy of the debate is that even such radical changes as MIRV, the breakdown of Communist centralism, and the onset of strategic parity fail to shake the two truly fundamental and invariant premises of strategic nuclear policy and the strategic arms debate:

- Nuclear weapons *are* different and their dangers represent an unprecedented discontinuity in human history. No school of thought disputes this.

- The Soviet Union remains an enemy and an adversary and an opponent and a competitor of the United States; the likelihood of establishing relations approximating those we have with Canada, Western Europe, and Japan is close to zero. However, the same could have been said of Germany and Japan 45 years ago.

The same fundamental premises are likely to hold for the foreseeable future, and they will continue to constrain and direct future strategic nuclear policy and the debate.

THE FUTURE: A PERSONAL SYNTHESIS ON WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

In fact, the world may be changing, in two ways that can be basic to policy and the debate. One could be a turning point, the other is a trend that has been continuing for a while and should be recognized.

- Gorbachev may really be different enough to represent a true turning point. At the beginning of his tenure, Western analysts generally stressed that his differences were primarily stylistic compared with his aged predecessors. More recently, the Sovietological consensus is pointing out that he may really mean it but he is having great difficulty with the massive Soviet *apparatus*. The next increment may move on from there; predictably, it will also have many "buts" in it. One necessary "but," however, parallels the early 1960s: We have no guarantees that Gorbachev will last. The fundamental Soviet economic problems will.
- There has been no real threat of nuclear conflict, or of military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, certainly for 13 years, probably for nearly twice that. Many authorities argue that the Yom Kippur War of 1973 never presented a real danger of a U.S.-U.S.S.R. clash. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the Berlin confrontations of the previous year surely did present such dangers, but the relative relaxation since then may be due in part to the fears created by those events.

Both of these changes or potential changes are profound. Neither, however, is likely to change the two fundamental premises for strategic policy: Nuclear knowledge will not be unlearned, and the weapons will remain unprecedently dangerous; U.S. relations with the Soviets will remain very different from those with Canada or France or Japan.

Strategic nuclear policy will continue to be based on deterrence. And deterrence brings with it the paradox highlighted by the Catholic bishops and their critics from both sides: The threat to use nuclear weapons is basic to peace, stability, and well-being; implementation of that threat would, with a high probability, be immoral and self-defeating.

This is the paradox that the Extenders have attempted to solve by designing nuclear postures and planning nuclear tactics with such careful precision and control that death and destruction would be kept to levels that, while horrible, would be within the range of historical human experience. Such control could not only limit damage; by making response certain, it would enhance deterrence and make even less likely the initial events leading to nuclear confrontation.

I agree with the Limiters that the inherent uncertainties make such control impossible to depend on. With Bundy, I believe that deterrence is existential, depending on uncertainty, not on certainty. It follows that I disagree with Wohlstetter that such plans and weapons can be meaningful in the way that he intends. But what Wohlstetter points out, and has been pointing out since "The Delicate Balance of Terror" in 1959, is that deterrence is neither easy nor automatically based on the mere existence of nuclear explosives. Making it too simple will make it too solvable. Ideas such as limiting nuclear weapons to 200 single-warhead hardened land-based missiles on each side are too easy to get around. So is sole dependence on submarine-based weapons.

What it comes to is that if deterrence is based on uncertainty rather than certainty, then the kinds of complex weapons and plans recommended by the Extenders are crucial for deterrence *not because they engender the kind of certainty claimed by their advocates, but because they are necessary to maintain uncertainty*. The Extenders' postures are necessary for the Limiters' existential deterrence.

The physical basis of U.S. deterrence is the Triad of land-based missiles, submarine-based missiles, and aircraft now equipped with gravity bombs and cruise missiles. The Soviets cannot attack all of these simultaneously and successfully, and their consequent uncertainty about the outcome of such an attack is central to its deterrence. What I am suggesting, then, is that the Extenders' postures lead logically to a "Niad," an N-dimensional Triad, that leaves the enemy and ourselves so uncertain as to what would happen if nuclear war began that neither side can contemplate using nuclear weapons. Existential deterrence will be preserved into the indefinite future. Wohlstetter's tactics are necessary for Bundy's strategy.

As one example, the likelihood of SDI fulfilling President Reagan's dream of a near-perfect population defense is generally conceded to be close to zero. It may not work for area and population defense at all; it probably can work at least to some degree for point defense of missile sites and other military targets. But making SDI one more tactic within our overall strategy is bound to complicate the enemy's problem and thereby enhance uncertainty and existential deterrence.

What remains to be asked is: What are the costs, in budgetary and other terms? SDI is expensive, so are the other weapons in the Extenders' proposed armory. And here, leaving aside the political issues of military versus other expenditures, my own feeling is that neither SDI efforts going beyond research nor other strategic weapons, even though they might enhance existential deterrence somewhat, should be granted first claim on the marginal military dollar. Military as well as other budgets are limited, and conventional capabilities need priority. Although these capabilities have been increased under the Reagan administration, not enough improvement has taken place either in NATO or worldwide response forces. As the Congress predictably cuts back on proposed administration defense expenditures, too many of the cutbacks weigh on force readiness—spare parts, maintenance, training. Whether the fault is with the cutbacks or with Defense Department failure to plan reallocations in advance of inevitable cuts is moot and less-than crucial. Restorations and improvements here are more important to U.S. security, NATO posture, and ultimately to world peace than are major SDI efforts or other nuclear furlongs and curlicues.

Further, costs are not only fiscal. I agree with the Limiters that arms agreements are important for stabilizing deterrence. Bundy, Kennan, McNamara, and Smith's title, "The President's Choice: Star Wars or Arms Control,"¹¹ illustrates another potential cost of SDI. Its presumed negative effect on possible arms agreements has been the major reason Limiters oppose SDI.¹² The point here is not that such considerations must predominate, nor that SDI is necessarily incompatible with arms agreements; after Reykjavik, the same four authors conceded that SDI might indeed be a bargaining lever for bringing about arms agreements.¹³ Rather, the effect of SDI in either direction should remain a major consideration.

Whether whatever happened at Reykjavik was as real or as meaningful as the administration made it seem in the immediate aftermath

¹¹Bundy et al.

¹²See Levine, "The SDI Debate as a Continuation of History," pp. 45-49.

¹³Bundy, Kennan, McNamara, and Smith, "Reykjavik's Grounds for Hope."

is an open proposition, as is the contention made by some that only the President's stubborn adherence to SDI sabotaged what would otherwise have been an arms-control breakthrough. In any case, at least if they are badly handled, SDI and other aspects of the Extenders' detailed strategy may exact costs in terms of arms agreements or other stabilizing arms controls. Properly treated, however, carefully planned nuclear postures and strategies may enhance agreements, both as levers in helping to obtain them and as integral portions of the agreement, as suggested not only by many Limiters but by Kissinger as well.

For myself, then, I come out with many of the Limiters, favoring:

- An austere, detailed, discriminating counterforce strategy, excluding neither anti-ballistic-missile defenses nor, at this time, first use of nuclear weapons,
- set forth in such a way as to enhance the possibility of arms agreements, by careful design aimed at assistance in negotiating those agreements (but not as a "bargaining chip" to be simply traded away at the proper point),
- and ultimately to be integrated into the arms agreements themselves so that both the strategy and the agreements will enhance stable deterrence.

These thoughts will probably not end the strategic nuclear debate.

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